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ROBERT McCOLL MILLAR

A HISTORY *of the*
SCOTS LANGUAGE

Ca' Canny doon the Brae

A History of the Scots Language

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ROBERT MCCOLL MILLAR

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Preface

Writing the history of any language is a daunting task. The question is often not what should be placed in the work as what needs to be left out. This task becomes more daunting when dealing with a language, like Scots, which is patchily recorded at times and is used by all speakers alongside a much more overtly prestigious and closely related language. As I say below, therefore, I made the decision early on that I would separate (wherever this is possible) the *sociolinguistic* from the *linguistic* history of Scots. It may be that readers find this unwieldy; at times at least they are likely to be right. In my view, however, to attempt to provide a single (and apparently seamless) narrative for both aspects of change may be factitious on this occasion.

One aspect which marks off this book in its structure and development from other work is that it attempts as deep an historical coverage as is possible, whilst also maintaining a focus on the modern dialects as the outcome of the changes involved rather than as an adjunct to the written form. I had hoped to provide a final chapter which involved a discussion of the development of 'peripheral' dialects. The size of the manuscript and the competing claims of the linguistic discussions led to this plan being altered. Much of what was going to be said has been included in the first four chapters, however. Interested readers might also wish to consult my *Modern Scots: An Analytical Description*; a further work, *Dialects of Scots*, written along with Dawn Leslie, should be published in 2025.

Elements of this work have been presented to a range of audiences over the last thirty years. I have always been grateful for all suggestions and criticisms given.

Finally, since politics and sociolinguistics are at times almost inextricable, a declaration: I support Scottish Independence and am a member of the Scottish National Party. Languages in general and Scots in particular are no one ideological group's possession, however. I have therefore attempted to keep my views on a number of matters underplayed in the narrative. If you feel I have not succeeded, get in touch: we can have a talk about it.

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I began writing this book in earnest at the start of 2020. No one could have predicted then what was in store for the world. I wrote parts of Chapter [5](#) when ill with COVID-19. The people around me suffered from that decision and its after-effects. I ask for their forgiveness.

I would like to remember everyone who has suffered in these last three years, for whatever reason. Let us hope for better times and a new beginning for all nations and individuals.

With all this in mind, I need to touch on the lives and experience of the two people I love before all others: my beloved wife, Sandra Weyland, and our wonderful daughter, Mairi. Sandra has spent almost thirty years here in Scotland. She has paid her taxes; more importantly, she has served her adopted country with love and time. She is now treated as a barely tolerated foreigner: not by the will of

the citizens of the country she lives in, but by the actions of the leaders of the state that dominates that country.

Mairi has not known the terror and poverty that many people her age have felt in these dark times. But she has known sadness and uncertainty. That she has walked towards her adult life in such a positive way is to be admired; that so many of her generation, from Kharkiv to Bristol, have seen the future, and felt its promise without flinching, is a wonderful thing.

This book is dedicated to Sandra and Mairi, with love and respect to all people, and all countries, who have been mistreated by the leaders of their more powerful neighbours.

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1

What is Scots?

1.1 The daily linguistic 'commute'

Everyone travels along a personal linguistic continuum on a daily basis, depending on whom we meet, what we (and they) are doing, and our relationships with those with whom we interact. When you go to discuss your child's progress at school with a teacher you do not know, you will inevitably speak in a more formal way than you would when you meet friends in a relaxed context. Even if you *do* know the teacher, your linguistic interaction is likely to be far more formal and (politely) distant during this interaction than it would be under other circumstances.

My daily linguistic 'commute' may be longer than it is for many people and includes a number of variables which affect it which are not caused directly by questions of linguistic appropriateness. When I am at work, my primary code in speech and writing is Scottish Standard English. I have a diverse collection of colleagues and students, so using another variety might be analysed as being exclusionary. There are a few occasions when this rule might not apply, however. One of my academic colleagues and I regularly speak our native dialects (or something approaching them) to each other; I also do so with one or two of our office staff, and with some ancillary staff. At home, I also generally speak informal Standard English. My wife is from Luxembourg; as well as an already considerable linguistic repertoire—Luxembourgish, German, French,

and English—she has some command of the dialect local to where we live. On occasion I am likely to speak my dialect with my family; I am aware that I am doing so more as both my daughter and I grow older. Despite this, honesty demands that I say that it is rare indeed for me to speak my dialect in its *densest* state, the term McClure (1979) coined to replace the potentially pejorative but widely used *broad* (or *braid*).

1.2 Attitudes and history

For many Scottish people, this is linguistic reality. We rarely speak our local dialects in their 'purest' sense; conversely, we do not lose (or wish to lose) our Scottish identity, even when speaking Standard English. The densest representation of local dialect, those which are least like the overtly prestigious written (and spoken) variety, are often not comprehensible to native speakers of English who have not lived in Scotland for long. In their first weeks of study here at the University of Aberdeen, a number of my students from southern English or North American backgrounds have, over the years in which I have worked there, been quite surprised to discover that the porters and cleaners in their Halls of Residence are speaking a close relative of their native variety and not 'Gaelic' (ironically, the local people with whom they come into contact are probably trying hard to speak English to them). This introduces us to a further reality for Scottish people: they are expected to understand people from the rest of the English-speaking world, while the opposite is not always expected, even when a monolingual English speaker lives in Scotland.

This type of relationship can be turned on its head, however. In the second or third week of her residence as a student in Aberdeen, my wife was standing for longer than expected at a bus stop with her *messages* 'groceries', overstepping the point where it is acceptable to ignore the other people in the queue. Sandra commented on the weather to her neighbour, an elderly woman,

who said 'Ye soond affa English' 'you sound very English'. Sandra, suitably flattered, as she thought, thanked her. 'It's nocht tee be prood o' 'it's nothing to be proud of'. In the following weeks, Sandra developed a local accent.

In many ways this situation is not very different to relationships between speakers of highly divergent dialects and monodialectal, often economically and politically powerful, speakers of the standard dialect. Traditional Yorkshire English at its densest, for instance, is barely comprehensible to many people from southern England (and little more so for people from Scotland). Yet very few people would claim that Yorkshire English was anything more than a highly distinctive dialect of English. The dialects spoken in Scotland and in the remnants of the seventeenth-century Scottish diaspora in Ireland are somewhat different in their associations and their employment. Reasons for this can be found both in the varieties' history and in their contemporary and historical associations.

1.3 An interpretation of its nature

Scots, the Germanic varieties spoken in Scotland and the far north of Ireland (otherwise known as, among other things, *Shaetlan*, *the Doric*, *Glesca*, *Ullans*, *Lallans*, along with many other local designations) had, according to the 2011 Scotland census, 1.5 million (out of a possible 5.2 million) speakers in the former country (this number is probably lower than the reality, although the matter is contentious; see Macafee 2017 and Sebba 2019). But Scots, of which these dialects, most people would agree, form a part, has a long history, and ongoing reality, as a language of high literature, unlike most dialects of English where, for most of the last five centuries or so, written expression has largely been confined to folk literature. Until around the end of the sixteenth century, Scots was on the way to becoming the standardized governmental language for Scotland. This marks it off from all dialects of English, with the exception of the late medieval London variety which became

Standard English. We will discuss these issues in considerable depth in Chapters [3](#) and [4](#) in particular.

Elsewhere I have described Scots as a 'once and future language' (Millar 2018: Chapter [8](#)). What might this mean from the viewpoint of the sociology of language? At the same time the statement recognizes that a number of people might object to the use of *language* as the appropriate term for Scots; to some extent, at least in contemporary terms, they are correct.

1.4 The sociology of language

Societal relationship of whatever sort lies at the heart of the ways in which speakers of different language varieties, whether languages or dialects, interact with each other. When the term *sociolinguistics* is used, it is natural to think of *variationist sociolinguistics*, findings from which are employed in many of the following chapters. On this occasion, however, I will concentrate briefly upon another set of sociolinguistic views, connected not so much with the effects of social realities and attitude on an individual's language use as with the ways in which societal structures, contemporary and historical, affect the status and use of particular language varieties: the *sociology of language*.

1.4.1 What do we mean by *language*?

A problematical issue within this field is the concept of *language* itself. At first glance, what a language *is* seems straightforward. When we learn a foreign language at school, the process appears straightforward (albeit at times onerous). It is a task of learning a new lexis, phonology, and morphosyntax. For an English speaker, learning Spanish is likely to be 'easier' than learning, say, Tamil, but the process will be essentially the same. When we analyse the

concept of *language*, however, it is much more nuanced than our school-based experience would suggest.

My wife, as I have said, comes from Luxembourg, in central Europe. The Grand Duchy has three official languages: French, German, and Luxembourgish (*Lëtzebuergesch*). In order to become a citizen of the country, however, you must demonstrate facility in only the last. Strikingly, however, it is only in relation to the last that there is any issue with the variety's being considered a language. From a linguistic viewpoint, Luxembourgish is a fairly mainstream western Middle German dialect, albeit one where French has had considerable lexical and some phonological effect. From a sociolinguistic point of view, however, it is a language. Partly this has been caused by the attenuation of the dialect continuum on the German side of its border: the influence of High German as the 'national language' since mass literacy was rolled out in the nineteenth century is felt much more strongly in Germany than in Luxembourg, where French was the socially preferred written language. Partly this distinction is political: Luxembourgish is the language of an independent country. Partly it is historical: the brutal German occupation of the country (and its forced incorporation into the Reich) between 1940 and 1944 signalled the end of any possibility of German being seen as the 'democratic' language of the territory; for a discussion, see Millar 2005: 28–9).

On the other hand, my native variety, Scots, as we have seen, is often perceived sociolinguistically as a *dialect* of English; linguistically, however, it could readily be analysed as a language. The level of mutual intelligibility between it and its close relative English is at best low, in particular with traditional, normally rural, 'dense' forms of Scots. Historically, Scots *was* a language. Since the seventeenth century, however, it has been *dialectalized* under English, which is perceived as the variety of abstraction, reasoned argument and writing, rather than of emotion and speech.

Heinz Kloss (see, in particular, his book of 1978 or, in English, his article of 1967) developed a model whereby the state of *language* could be perceived as dynamic. Languages can be defined as such through analysis inspired by two conceptualizations. One of these is

Abstand, the German for 'distance'; the second is *Ausbau* 'development'. *Abstand* refers to the situation where two language varieties have little or no mutual intelligibility; the varieties must therefore be considered separate languages. English is in a state of *Abstand* with French (this is a sliding scale: Portuguese and Spanish have far less *Abstand* between them than German and Japanese). *Ausbau* refers to human agency. Languages are standardized. Essentially one variety is chosen, whether consciously or not, as representative of the 'best' of the language as a whole. Alternatively, a standard variety is created from what are considered the most 'genuine' parts of the language; this was carried out in the nineteenth century for what is now the *Nynorsk* standard version of Norwegian. The *Ausbau* process often involves differentiation from similar varieties spoken by near neighbours. Standard Slovak has been specifically designed, since the late nineteenth century, to be less like Czech in its written form than might otherwise be the case. In rather more fractious circumstances, Serbian and Croatian (along with Bosnian and Montenegrin), which were once represented by one standard variety, Serbo-Croat, have been developed in such a way as to emphasize difference over similarity.

It should be noted that, with a few exceptions, Czech and Slovak being particularly apposite, most standard varieties possess both *Abstand* and *Ausbau* qualities which mark language status, although not necessarily to the same extent. Dutch and German, for instance, exhibit more *Ausbau* in their differences than *Abstand*; Basque possesses absolute *Abstand* with all varieties. By the same token, the difference between full languages and varieties with language-like features which are not official in their territory tends to be a matter of *Ausbau*: Scots, in its densest form, is *Abstand* with English but not fully *Ausbau*; Luxembourgish is *Ausbau* with Standard German, but not fully *Abstand*.

As Kloss points out, however, the distinction between language and dialect is not only related to distance and development. A *language* can be defined as one which, essentially, is connected to the operations of government, education and, often, 'high' cultural contexts. It has a standardized form, which makes it more readily

learnable for native (and non-native) speakers because it has a standardized orthography and grammar. Generally, it will have at least one comprehensive dictionary which is often available in shorter versions to the general public, schools, and the bureaucracy. Often it will have a planning committee to support and develop its use. It is the language which the state uses when corresponding with citizens; citizens are generally expected to reply in the same variety. There is often a spoken standard form, based on the written form. In some places, such as England, one pronunciation is given prestige (Received Pronunciation); in Scotland, Standard English is generally spoken following the norms of local, usually middle class, pronunciations. No one accent, no matter its geographical or social origins, prevails, although a former colleague of mine, born in West Central Scotland, speaks with an Edinburgh accent.

Most dialects have very few of these features. They are perceived as in many ways subsidiary, if not subservient, to the standard, perceived as 'the language'. A dialect of this type—which Kloss termed a *Normaldialekt*—is largely oral and intimate in nature. If it is used in public (particularly written) domains, this use tends to be related either to cultural contexts or to humorous or sentimental events, often connected to the past. It is rarely used in written contexts. When it is, its use may be related to newspaper cartoons, folk poetry, and, nowadays, social media posts. Folk culture and literature—in particular, poetry and song—is occasionally studied in schools. These categories of use can be described as representing a state of diglossia, as defined by Ferguson (1959).

In between these two states is what Kloss termed the *Ausbaudialekt*. These varieties are not the official languages of a polity. They regularly have a written existence which borders on, but does not reach, the official. You would hear this type of language used in semi-formal political contexts, such as at a husting. If it were used in a parliament, however, the official record would either be 'standardized' towards the dominant language (if that is a relative) or translated (when the prestige and the popular varieties are not closely related). Many (although not all) Ausbau dialects can be analysed as *dialectalized languages*. There was a time when

practically no-one would have questioned the idea that Occitan and Low German were languages of themselves. They are now often seen by external and internal observers alike as somewhat unusual dialects of French and High German respectively. It is likely that Scots is a member of this class: the *kin-tongues* (Kloss 1984), varieties which are in competition with close relatives whose speakers (and writers) possess more economic, cultural, and political power.

1.4.2 Ausbau revisited: *Standardization*

Most languages of state are *standardized*. This means that there is a generally agreed orthography, grammatical system and lexical system which can generally be contained within officially sanctioned and authoritative dictionaries. Many (probably most) of these features imply that other varieties of a language possess features which are less acceptable. This may be particularly the case where the standard is associated with a particular place and, indeed, a particular group of people in that place. Inherent in the spread of a standardized variety is an educational and governmental system which treats the Standard not as a variety of the language but as *the* language.

Joseph (1987) distinguishes between two types of standardization: *circumstantial* and *engineered*. A classic example of circumstantial standardization can be found in the history of English. Standard English derives from the varieties spoken by a range of literate people living in London during the fifteenth century. Contributing factors—involving an increasingly centralized and powerful Royal administration and simultaneous growing urbanization associated with the development of extensive and lucrative trading networks and the importation and exploitation of movable type printing—meant that this London variety became the written norm for the kingdom. On practically no occasion, however, did anyone involved think they were standardizing English. Rather, the creation and

promotion of the new variety derived from the linguistic and social environment in which the variety was formed (Millar 2012a).

In opposition to this form of norm creation stands *engineered standardization*. Planners self-consciously create a variety of the language, which they associate with particular virtues that other varieties do not possess. This new variety normally does not spring from a 'natural' speech community. Instead, it represents a combination of features from a range of varieties that are considered by the planners and their milieu to be the 'best' or the most 'representative' and 'genuine'. One of the two standard varieties of Norwegian—*Nynorsk* 'Modern Norwegian'—is a classic example of this process. Designed during a period when Norway was moving from a state of autonomy towards full independence, the variety is based upon a range of (south-) western dialects which were considered by its planners—at their centre the schoolmaster Ivar Aasen—to be the most reflective of their view of a Norwegian peasant democracy. The variety was perceived as descending in purity from Old Norse in areas where the influence of urban, Danish-dominated, society was least pervasive. Elsewhere (Millar 2005: 120–8) I have described this as a 'back to the future' strategy.

1.4.3 Is an adequate sociolinguistic definition for Scots possible?

This book generally uses the term *language* when referring to Scots. This is done advisedly and with considerable awareness of the level of contention it might cause with some people (and not necessarily those whose views are in any way anti-Scots or anti-Scottish). Nevertheless, I do so for two essential reasons.

One of these is pragmatic. This series is concerned with the history of *languages*. While the history of many other languages fray round the edges (the absolute distinction between German and Dutch is a good example of this), most varieties have support from a state apparatus to preserve their difference. The distinction between

the historical linguistic developments of English and Scots is often problematical. The contemporary reality is even more problematical, as we will see. This has made many historians of Scots treat somewhere around 1200 as the 'ground zero' of the language, before which any discussion must be framed inside the history of 'English'. I respect this viewpoint and have often abided by its central precepts. In this book, however, I have chosen regularly to emphasize the roots of Scots in Old English and that variety's ancestors.

The other reason for using the term *language* for Scots is based on linguistic principles. Whilst, as I have said, a linguistic continuum exists for all Scots speakers between their native variety and Scottish Standard English (or its equivalents in Ireland), this reality is inherently different from equivalent situations elsewhere in the English-speaking world. It also ignores both the language's history as an essentially separate entity and modern evidence of the perception by some speakers of its discrete identity (Unger 2013). While there are undoubtedly ideological reasons—for me and for others—for maintaining this discrete identification, these reasons are also methodological in nature.

1.5 The dialects of Scots

Scots is, as we have seen, essentially unstandardized at present. It is made up of a range of often very different dialects, each of which at least in theory is equal in status to all the others ([Map 1.1](#)). Outside Scotland there may be less of an awareness of this diversity, since population centres in the (urban) Central dialect areas tend to dominate in the broadcast media (as well as the varieties of Scots you are likely to meet unless you have direct access to the Northern or Insular dialects). In the following section we will quickly consider the different contemporary dialects of the language. This will be of some importance to the in-depth discussion of usage in the following chapters.



Map 1.1 Dialects of Scots

The following distinctions are largely phonological in nature; some lexical differences will also be provided, however. They are based on the discussion in my 2018 book, itself derived from the work of a range of authorities. It must be borne in mind throughout that what are illustrated here are in many ways idealizations. Local variation within these large-scale units is considerable; all speakers of the different varieties generally write in Standard English and often approach it in speech according to the linguistic continuum discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

Central (with Ulster) and Southern

/ɔ/ 'all'; /'tɒtɪ/, /'tati/ (East Central) 'potato'	/de/ 'do', /fler/ 'floor'
/jin/ (West Central); /en/ (East Central) 'one'	/bit/ 'boot'
/mɪt/ 'what'	/skɪl/ 'school'
/mæɪt/ 'white'	/sten/ 'stone'
/bak/ 'bake'	/θɔxt/ 'thought'
<i>wee</i> 'small'	
<i>wean</i> (Western, South West, Ulster), <i>bairn</i> (Eastern) 'child'	

Some South-East varieties show a pattern of diphthongization with some of these vowels, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5; Ulster varieties generally have more diphthongization in their historically long vowels than is usual in Scotland, where monophthongal pronunciations are the norm.

Northern

/a/ 'all'; /'tati/ 'potato'	/di/ 'do', /flir/ 'floor'
/en/ (Mid-Northern B); /ɪn/ (Mid-Northern A) 'one'	/bit/ 'boot'
/fɪt/ 'what'; zero in Black Isle	/skwɪl/ 'school' (Mid-Northern); /skɪl/ (Caithness)
/fæɪt/ 'white'; zero in Black Isle	/stɪn/ (Mid-Northern A); /sten/ (all other Northern dialects); 'stone'
/bjak/ 'bake' (Mid-Northern)	/θɔxt/ 'thought'
<i>wee</i> 'small'	
<i>bairn</i> ; <i>little een</i> 'child'	

Discussion of the Northern treatment of Middle Scots /xw/ or /ɹ/ will be provided in Chapter 5.

Between the Central and South Northern dialects lies a linguistic continuum, expressed geographically. South Northern and the furthest north forms of north East Central have /f/ where more southerly dialects have /ɹ/, but only with interrogative and relative pronouns: 'white' is /mɛit/. In north East Central and the more southern South Northern varieties, 'do' is /de/ and 'floor' is /flɛr/. In more northern South Northern varieties, 'do' is /di/ and 'floor' is /flɪr/; as with north East Central varieties, /e/ is also found with the equivalent to *school* and *boot* in South Northern.

Northern Isles

/a/ 'all'; /'tati/; /'tɔti/ (northern Shetland)	/dy/ 'do', /flyr/ 'floor'
'potato'	
/en /in/ (Shetland) 'one'	/byt/ 'boot'
/mat/; Northern Shetland /kwat/ 'what'	/skyl/ 'school' (/styl/ on Whalsay)
/mɛit/; Northern Shetland /kwɛit/ 'white'	/sten/; /stin/ (Shetland) 'stone'
/bak/ 'bake'	/θɔxt/ (Orkney); /tɔxt, tɔu(x)t/ 'thought'
<i>peedie/peerie</i> 'small'	
<i>bairn</i> 'child'	

On occasion the linguistic diversity found among the dialects of Scots can be daunting. It is sometimes exaggerated in localized views on local varieties, in relation to Scots as a whole. Nevertheless, as this book will demonstrate, all dialects share common features which both represent a common historical origin and a common modern linguistic reality.

1.6 Historical periodization

In this book I will employ the following terms to describe the different historical periods through which Scots has passed. *Early Scots* refers to the period between around 1200 and around 1450, where increasing amounts of literate expression for the language is found. The period could be said to come to an end with the

beginnings of the Great Vowel Shift (which will be discussed at considerable length in Chapter [5](#)). *Middle Scots* is used for the written material produced between 1450 and around 1700 (although this end date is problematical because so little Scots is recorded by this point). Early and Middle Scots are often termed *Older Scots* (in line with the coverage of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*). The *Modern Scots* period runs from 1700 until now.

Any distinctions of this sort are inevitably at least in origin arbitrary. Kopaczyk (2013b) has suggested an alternative periodization with which I sympathize. The primary reason for why I do not employ her distinctions is because the periodization employed in this book is perceived as the norm in most of the literature on the subject.

Pre-Scots is also used occasionally for the Germanic varieties spoken in Scotland before 1200. I have also used *Bernician*, *northern Old Northumbrian*, and, very occasionally, *Northern Middle English*, when I have considered these more appropriate to the argument presented. I hope that the following three chapters will explain these rather eclectic choices. In Chapters [3](#) and [4](#), which focus on the external history of Scots, the name *Inglis* is used for Scots from around the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, after which *Scots* is used. For consistency's sake, this distinction is not observed in the linguistic Chapters [5](#), [6](#), and [7](#), however.

1.7 The ecology

In order to understand better the issues covered in this book, a brief description of the physical and economic geographies of Scotland and Ulster must be given, with particular concentration on the parts of Scotland and Ireland where speakers of Scots have lived and continue to live.

Mainland Scotland, represented in [Map 1.2](#) in relation to its counties before 1975 (places mentioned in the text can be found in [Map 1.3](#)) can be separated into three main geographical zones. The

south of the country is often hilly; to the west, these hills could be defined as mountains. These Southern Uplands represent a considerable barrier for movement from north to south (and vice versa) and, to a lesser extent, west to east (or vice versa). Time-honoured transits from river valley to river valley, as found between the upper valleys of the Annan (which flows to the Solway Firth in the northern Irish Sea) and the Clyde (which flows, through its great Firth, to the North Channel between Scotland and Ireland), are still in use today (on this occasion, by the M74, the motorway, which runs from Glasgow to Cumbria in north-west England). The rocks of the Southern Uplands are hard and, except in the valley bottoms, herding of various animals dominates in agriculture; industrial forestry is practised in more sheltered places.



Map 1.2 Scotland: pre-1975 counties



Map 1.3 Scotland: places mentioned in the text

The southern limit of the Highlands is visible along a boundary fault running from central Arran in the Firth of Clyde to Stonehaven on the North Sea, some 30 kilometres south of Aberdeen. In general, hard rock—igneous or metamorphic—and thin soil dominates geologically, except in the valley bottoms and, in the case of the Laigh of Moray, highly fertile land on the edge of the sea. Again, herding was, to some extent is, the primary agricultural occupation, although forestry has been a major undertaking over the last century and more. Much of the area was historically forested, but this wood had practically disappeared by the nineteenth century. The commercial exploitation of wood led to considerable, essentially industrial, reforestation from the early twentieth century on.

Most Scots speakers live in the Lowlands of Scotland, a fertile region between the Highlands and the Southern Uplands. The agriculture practised in the region is partly livestock-based and partly arable. The primary crops now cultivated are barley, oats, root vegetables, and tubers, along with seasonal crops of hay and oil seed rape. In the Carse of Gowrie (in Perthshire) and the Lowland parts of Angus and southern Kincardineshire, commercial crops of soft fruits, for jam, but also for direct sales, wine and as flavouring for a range of goods, are a focal point for local agriculture. This type of agriculture was also the norm in both the recent and more distant past, with the proviso that much of the bottomlands, so fertile now, were marginal until the eighteenth century; often used for the herding of animals.

The central animal of Scottish farming is the cow, bred for both meat and the creation of milk products (indeed, so central is the cow that the term *beast* is largely associated with that species, particularly by those involved in farming). Sheep are also bred, in particular in more marginal lands, for meat and wool. Pigs are, perhaps, less common than in other European countries, but are certainly regularly to be found across the region. In recent years alpacas have been introduced for their wool. Chicken, turkey, ducks,

and geese are kept in considerable numbers for the production of eggs and meat.

Until the nineteenth century, cattle droving from the Highlands (and also Buchan, the plateau to the north of Aberdeen) into the Lowlands, in particular Falkirk, where the Coo Wynd reminds us of the markets there, was a major seasonal employer. From an early period Gaelic speakers also moved temporarily (sometimes permanently) into Scots-speaking territories for the harvest or, later, to work in the expanding industrial concerns of Glasgow and other settlements.

Until the eighteenth century, as briefly mentioned above, the amount of usable land was considerably less than is the case now (particularly, perhaps, with arable land). The great programme of *improvement*, which took place in that century and the following, included drainage of marginal lands by scientific methods, irrevocably changing this environment. This was accompanied by the development of new strains of vegetables and other crops, often more resistant to various diseases and predators, delivering greater harvests, Landholding was concentrated in fewer hands, often with access to reserves of capital not available to the previous small-scale form of peasant farming. Agriculture therefore became a largely capitalist enterprise (although this was less the case in the North until quite recently). The crops cultivated before this point were produced in smaller quantities, but, at least since the advent of potato cultivation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were essentially the same as now.

Fishing, both sea and fresh water, has always been a major feature of Scottish life: nowhere in the country is more than seventy kilometres from the sea. The North Sea in particular was blessed by a considerable wealth of edible aquatic animals, primarily because that sea is colder than the Atlantic to the west. Herring, haddock, and cod were particularly plentiful. Commercial fishing enterprises only really came into being in the Early Modern period, however. Capital was injected by local landowners or, later, fish merchants. Workers in the new concerns became essentially a 'race apart' in comparison with their landward neighbours, with whom there was

limited contact beyond commercial interaction. Conversely, relationships with other fishing communities, including some at some distance along the coast, were often close. Many of the fishing communities were also associated with evangelical forms of Christianity often not prominent in other parts of the country.

The high point of the industry was probably towards the end of the nineteenth century, when those employed in it ran into the tens of thousands. As of the early 2020s, however, only in Peterhead in Aberdeenshire can fishing be seen as a commercially viable concern. Even there the changes caused by the United Kingdom's leaving of the European Union have meant that previous viable—indeed, lucrative—connections to the continent have become far less so. It is entirely possible that these changes eventually spell the end of the Scottish fishing trade.

A further central feature of the ecology of the Lowlands, largely marking off the region from at least the Highland zone, is the mineral wealth previously or presently found there. This wealth is especially connected to fossil fuels—in particular coal, although oil is found not far off the coasts—and iron. While many of these resources were used in a small-scale way from early times, the focus on steam-driven industry from the late eighteenth century onwards led both to the major industrial areas in central Scotland acting as pull factors bringing formerly agricultural workers into the area (for a discussion, see Aitchison and Cassell 2003; see also Devine 2018). The proletarianization of this group has been at the heart of Scottish politics since then. From the post-war period on, heavy industry has declined in these regions. While most parts of the Central Belt, the heavily populated 'heart' of Scotland, have recovered from the dark days of unemployment and decline of the 1980s, the primarily service sector jobs which are now prevalent in the area are particularly dependent on the world economic situation.

Scots is the primary native variety spoken in the hillier areas in southern Scotland. As has been said, agriculture—whether arable or stock-based—dominates (and has long dominated). In southern Ayrshire and Lanarkshire, and across their borders in northern Dumfriesshire, however, coal and heavy metals (in particular lead)

were exploited (in the case of coal, until the 1980s). Fishing was also a major employer on the western, southern and eastern coasts of southern Scotland.

Northern Scotland possesses little of the mineral wealth of central and southern Scotland. That is not to say that locals have not long exploited the local geology. Stone—particularly granite—was quarried in the Aberdeen area and exported to considerable distances. Caithness in particular produced copious quantities of slate and flagstones, although the county's distance from major markets may have made it less attractive to potential markets.

Agriculture was (and to a degree is) a major contributor to the economy of the North. Arable farming is particularly rewarding in the valleys of the great rivers of the region. This is especially true in the *haughland*, the flood plain areas, regularly inundated by silt-rich waters. Caithness is strikingly less suited to commercial arable farming. Both the North-East and Caithness were (and to an extent are) also centres of livestock farming and game exploitation. Forestry is now a major employer in the North-East; Caithness is not well forested. Both regions had several major fishing centres at least until the post-war period; as we have seen, only a few of these (most notably Peterhead) continued commercial fishing into the twenty first century.

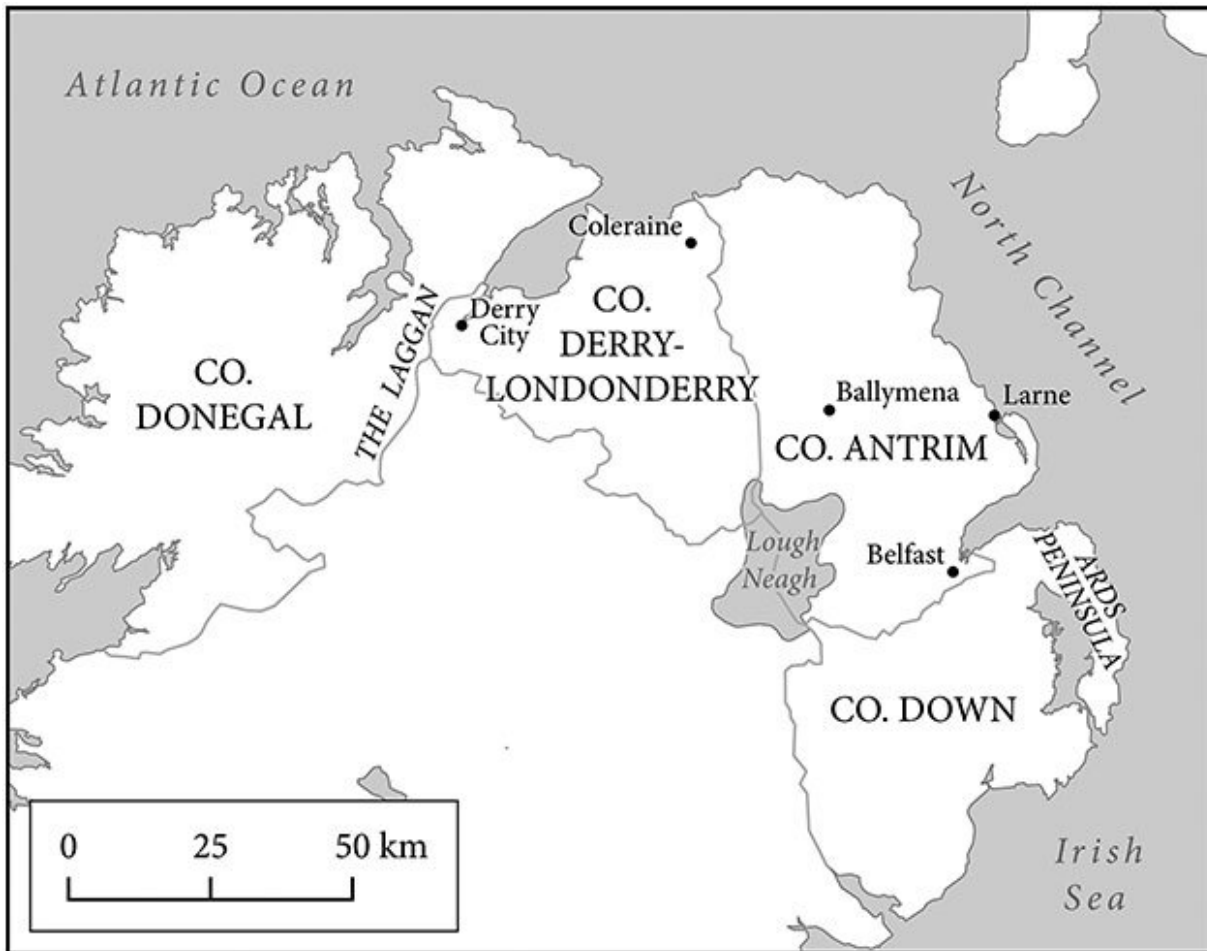
1.7.1 Northern Isles

From a distance, the two archipelagos of the Northern Isles appear similar. They are both the most recent additions to the Kingdom of Scotland (between 1489 and 1491); they share a common Norse heritage (albeit one which may be somewhat idealized by some inhabitants). Close up, however, there are considerable differences between the archipelagos. For instance, Orkney is generally very fertile. Barley in particular grows well there; livestock has always been profitably exploited. Shetland, on the other hand, generally has shallow soil laid on hard rock. The inhabitants of both archipelagos

have always fished; Shetlanders have done so as a matter of necessity. They have been willing to row considerable distances from land, following the fish. This willingness has occasionally led to considerable loss of life in accidents. While the number of people killed or maimed in these disasters seem small, the repercussions of this loss could be traumatic to island communities with low population numbers. Perhaps most strikingly, parts of Orkney are visible from the Scottish mainland, while Shetland lies far out on the edge of the continental shelf. Both island chains have practically no native woodland, except for ground hugging Arctic species. Imported strains grow well in sheltered sites in Orkney; this is less the case in Shetland.

1.7.2 Ulster

Scots speakers in Ulster have lived and live in a range of environments along the north-east, north and north west shores of Ireland ([Map 1.4](#)). They have in common the fact that their settlements are rarely far from the sea. This is unsurprising, when it is remembered that a large part of their ancestors entered Ireland from Scotland and that many maintained connections with their ancestral homeland for generations. The Ulster Scots part of my family, for instance, appear to have moved from Scotland to Ireland and back again every generation or so.



Map 1.4 Ulster Scots: places mentioned in text

The Scots-speaking parts of Ireland are different from Scots-speaking parts of Scotland in that, with the exception of Caithness, the Northern Isles and the Scots-speaking population centres of Argyll, Scots is spoken contiguously between Stranraer and Nairn. In Ulster, on the other hand, Scots is spoken in three distinct pockets: in the North-East parts of Co. Down, in particular on the Ards peninsula, in a large part of Co. Antrim (where the main towns include Larne and Ballymena), in eastern Co. Derry—Londonderry (where the town and resort of Coleraine is situated) and the western ‘island’—the Laggan—which runs from the western outskirts of Derry City through the fertile bottomlands to the south of Lough Swilly.

Most of the Ulster Scots area is dominated by farming—arable in the many fertile river valleys and based round the raising of livestock

in the hilly regions. Fishing was also of considerable importance along the coast. Ballymena in particular was associated with weaving in the nineteenth century. The development of large-scale industrial-level weaving in Belfast in the nineteenth century eventually rendered the earlier tradition redundant (while drawing many Ulster Scots speakers into that city).

Another distinguishing feature between Scots in Scotland and Scots in Ireland is that there was, in at least the early days of Scottish migration to Ireland, the constant presence of speakers of a Celtic language in the same spaces where Scots was spoken. In Scotland, except during the Middle Ages in a process barely documented, Scots and Gaelic have only been directly in contact along the line of the Gàidhealtachd; this contact is still present to some extent in Caithness. Modern migration has, however, brought Gaelic speakers in considerable numbers to industrialized Scotland; in particular to the Clydeside Conurbation. In Ireland, however, the relationship between speakers of Scots and Irish has been rather more complex, since Scots speakers, whether consciously or not, came to dispossess, or at least to marginalize, the native population (this did happen in Scotland, but transfer from Gaelic to Scots appears to have been largely a matter of language shift within the same population).

Moreover, from at least the same time as Scots speakers began to live in considerable numbers in Ulster, there were also English-speaking settlers in the near vicinity. In Scotland, on the other hand, English, in its standard form, was originally foreign. While the products of the contact between Scots and English in Scotland and in Ireland are often not tremendously different, the presence of English dialect material—particularly North Midlands dialect—in the core lexis of Ulster Scots makes it distinctly different from the Scots of Scotland, which has most in common with the contiguous dialects of Cumberland and, in particular, Northumberland, with which it forms a continuum. From at least the high Middle Ages, contact between speakers of Scots and speakers of Midlands English on Britain was severely limited until the nineteenth century. The contact in Ireland between speakers of these dialects (including regular

inter-marriage) has had considerable affects upon both Ulster English and Ulster Scots at all linguistic levels.

1.7.3 Urban and rural

Most speakers of Scots live in an urbanized environment today. This is particularly the case in Scotland. The Central Belt, running from the Firth of Clyde to the eastern suburbs of Edinburgh (as well as, arguably, western Fife and Dundee), is the population centre for the country, with close on three million inhabitants out of the five million or so people who live in Scotland. It was the industrial heartland, founded on the great reserves of coal and iron in the region. Heavy industry declined from the 1950s to the 1980s, when it was replaced by light industry and service industries of various sorts.

The Clydeside Conurbation has around 1.5 million inhabitants. At its heart is the city of Glasgow, surrounded by sizeable towns such as Paisley, Motherwell, and Clydebank (along with their satellite settlements), the towns of the Vale of Leven and the new towns of Cumbernauld and East Kilbride. Outliers to this central area include Kilmarnock and the large towns of Inverclyde. There is considerable affluence in the region, but this is matched by pockets of poverty, such as in parts of Renfrewshire.

Several towns connect Glasgow to the Edinburgh region. While the capital does not have as many large satellite towns as Glasgow has, its nature as a governmental and cultural centre encourages considerable in-migration.

Western Fife is made up by a range of medium-sized towns—such as Dunfermline (as of 2022, a city), Kirkcaldy, and the new town of Glenrothes. Originally dominated by coal mining and, on the coast, fishing, it is largely now a set of dormitory settlements for Edinburgh and (in the north) Dundee. That city was, according to tradition, founded upon the 'three Js'—jute, jam, and journalism. The first two are essentially moribund. The city experienced hard times in the

1980s, but has since reinvented itself as a regional centre with particular concentration on cultural pursuits.

The only other city in the Scots-speaking world is Aberdeen.¹ Including its satellite towns, such as Stonehaven, Banchory, Westhill, Inverurie, and Ellon, there are around 330,000 inhabitants. Originally prosperous through fishing and its position as a major market in the region, the discovery and exploitation of North Sea Oil in the second half of the twentieth century led to considerable prosperity and in-movement of people with required specialist skills. A large part of the city's hinterland was affected by these changes. Where agriculture has remained a major local employer, new technology has changed the number of people employed and the terminologies they employ. As we have seen, fishing has ceased to be a major employer in the region, except in Peterhead.

The two main population concentrations of Ulster—Belfast and Derry City—lie outside the Scots-speaking part of the province, although their dialects have been considerably influenced by Scots. A number of smaller towns are found in the Ulster Scots regions, including Larne, Ballymena, and Coleraine.

1.8 The book to come

In this book we will begin by considering the historical and societal forces which produced the day-to-day linguistic reality of dialectalization for Scots. This is a worthy goal in itself; many historical discussions of Scots (including my essay of 2012) go no further than this. This book will also consider the history of the phonology, morphosyntax, and lexis of Scots, largely without this sociolinguistic analysis. Before this, however, we will consider some of the means by which we can analyse the (pre-) history of Scots.

2

Historical and linguistic backgrounds

The Germanic languages, Old English, and the pre-Scots period

2.1 Introduction

As was suggested in the last chapter, what is now Scots did not appear from nothing around 1200. The language has the same historical depth as the great majority of other languages (most scholars of creole languages believe that many of these specific varieties have a relatively brief history; for a discussion, see Millar (forthcoming)). It is necessary to trace this pre-history of Scots—a pre-history, it should be noted, which is largely shared with English, although the final ‘products’ of this common development are sometimes strikingly different. The following can only be a sketch, therefore. It is also necessary to note that certain features and proposed relationships may not be accepted by all specialists in that particular field. Taking all of this on board, a narrative for the development of the ancestors of Scots can be built, leading back into the distant past. While much of this is guesswork, it is highly informed guesswork, with a tradition of scholarship going back at least two centuries.

2.2 Languages in prehistory

It is believed that human beings have had a language ability for at least 100,000 years (for a discussion, see the papers in Christiansen and Kirby 2003). A number of the languages which they spoke may have descendants today, although, where written records are available, a considerable number of languages—Etruscan and Sumerian spring to mind—have ceased to have native speakers. Sometimes a group of languages may go through the same process, as can be seen in the flowering and then disappearance of the Tocharian sub-family, spoken in what is now western China until around 1,300 years ago. It is very likely that these processes, so common nowadays due to the forces and people which drove imperialism and drive globalization, were also the reality in both the recent and distant past. Even when the technology of writing was available, languages were not written down; before around 5,000 years ago writing technology did not exist. At best we have some placename evidence, although this is often open to interpretation, to put it mildly. We have no real idea of how many languages and language families flourished and then declined in speaker number before eventually disappearing without or with hardly a trace (although Dixon's central thesis—the *punctuated equilibrium* hypothesis (Dixon 1997)—has been largely discredited, he presents a convincing analysis of how many languages must have 'died' since our ancestors first developed language).

Since even the language families which have been reconstructed reach back no more than 7,000 years or so (in the case of the Afro-Asiatic languages), we have limited means by which we can analyse the linguistic reality of the period before this.¹ Some scholars have put forward the idea that languages from different families in close proximity have moved towards each other and eventually merged. This might explain why there are relatively few small, independent language families, in particular in Eurasia. This view is certainly possible, but it would be almost impossible to prove or disprove.

2.3 Indo-European and its descendants

The first linguistic ancestor for Scots we can definitely trace is proto-Indo-European, a language, or range of related dialects, probably spoken in the Pontic Steppe (the southernmost parts of today's Ukraine and Russian Federation). Descendants of proto-Indo-European (before the expansion of speakers of a number of European languages in the modern era) could be found from the Atlantic coastlines of Ireland to Sri Lanka.

The proto-language split early on into a range of sub-dialects. The traditional way to demonstrate this split is to concentrate on the descendants of Indo-European palatal **/k/*. In the Germanic, Celtic, Italic, Greek, and, far in the east, Tocharian branches, the plosive nature of this sound was maintained for a considerable period (the Celtic languages and Greek—and to a degree the Romance dialects of Sardinia—maintain this sound in its original form). These are termed the *kentum* languages, after the Ancient Greek word for 'hundred' (Figure [2.1](#)). All the other Indo-European languages are classified as *satem*, after the Sanskrit word for the same number: these varieties had an early shift of the proto-Indo-European palatalized stops, including **/k/*, to fricative pronunciations. Language groupings which are *satem* include the Baltic, Slavonic, Indo-Iranian, Albanian, and Armenian.

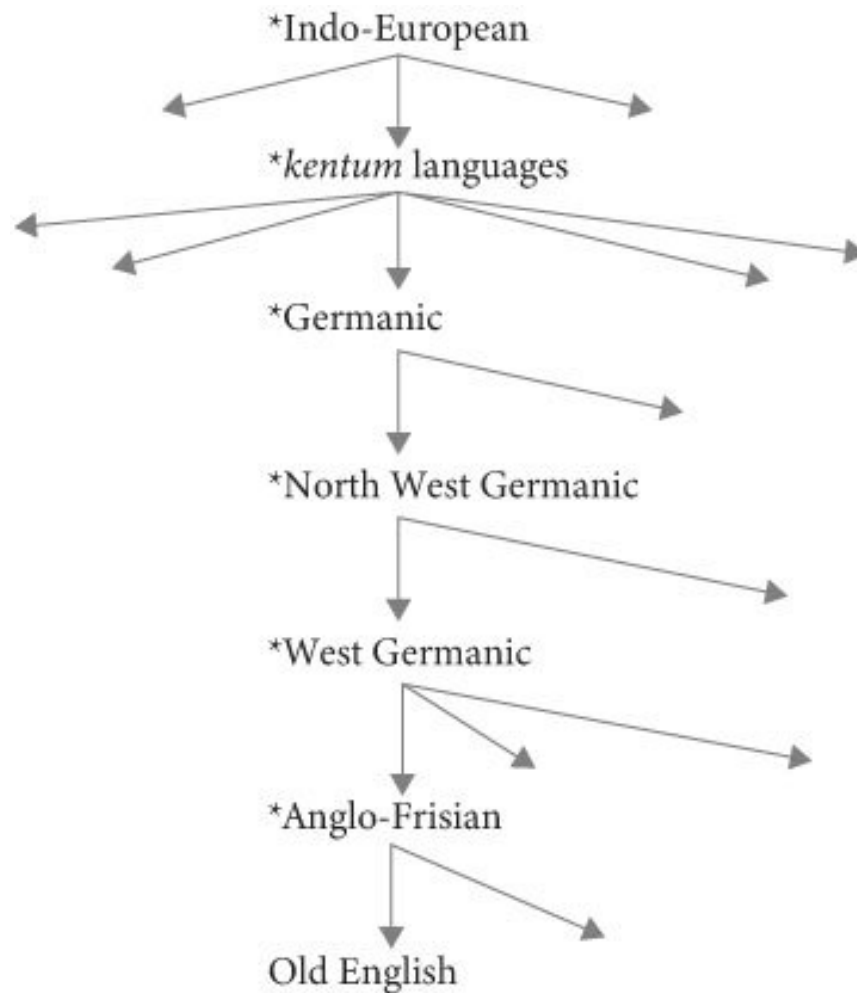


Figure 2.1 An abbreviated ancestry of Old English

While the *kentum/satem* split is a useful means of analysis, there are issues with its complete acceptance as a means of dividing the Indo-European languages. Greek and Armenian, for instance, a number of scholars claim, share a common parentage much closer than Indo-European (Gray and Atkinson 2003). Recently, scholars have claimed that the two-way split between *kentum* and *satem* actually masks a series of breakaways over a considerable period. The *kentum* languages, this view would suggest, represent sub-families which broke from proto-Indo-European rather earlier than was the case with their *satem* sisters (see, for instance, Olander 2019).

2.3.1 The Germanic languages

Scots is a member of the Germanic sub-family of Indo-European, the ancestor of which, proto-Germanic, was likely first spoken, somewhat over 2,000 years ago, in what is now southern Scandinavia, northern Germany, and the coastal strip of post-1945 Poland. Over time, many Germanic speakers were attracted west and south, in particular as Roman power began to be exerted on the Rhine and north of the Alps. At the same time, other Germanic speakers began to move north in Scandinavia, partly displacing the scattered Finno-Ugric speakers who lived in many places. As Roman power contracted and eventually collapsed, many Germanic speakers became involved in the Empire's politics, with eventual takeovers of power and the settlement of speakers of various Germanic dialects. Similar forces lie behind the movement of speakers of what would become Old English onto the Island of Britain.

Features which distinguish Germanic from other *kentum* groupings include the First Germanic Consonant Shift ('Grimm's Law'), a series of shifts in the articulation of consonants, so that Old English *fæder* 'father' is cognate to Latin *pater*. Connected in some way to this is the shift from variable word stress to invariable stress on the first syllable of the word (unless that syllable happens to be a prefix; this is often termed *Verner's Law*). Thus, in the case of the 'father' example, Latin exhibits the original stress of the Indo-European root: on the second syllable. The Old English form and its descendant in Scots, *faither* or *fadder*, have stress on the first syllable. These changes passed through the Germanic languages, we think, in the last centuries BCE.

By the fourth century CE at least, the Germanic dialects had separated into East Germanic (the only variety with a sizeable corpus being Gothic) and North-West Germanic. Evidence for this split can be found, among a number of other salient features, in the fact that, unlike all descendants of the latter language sub-grouping, Gothic does not have *i*-mutation (otherwise known as *umlaut*). Thus the

plural of *man(n)* is *men(n)* or equivalent in all the North-West Germanic languages, but *mannans* in Gothic.

From around the third to fifth centuries, the North-West Germanic sub-family itself split into north and west sub-families, although something like the undivided original was continued for a considerable period to be used by users of the runes (these writings are unlikely to represent actual speech of the time; for a discussion, see Antonsen 2002). The West Germanic languages split early on into two camps: those which went through the Second Germanic Consonant Shift, which affected what became Middle and Upper German (and became what we now think of as (High) German) and those which did not. In the former, we have *Kirche* 'church' (in some varieties, both ancient and modern, the pronunciation of the first syllable can be /xirx/), in comparison to Modern Dutch *kerk*.

Within the West Germanic languages, varieties spoken along what are now the Danish, German, and Dutch North Sea coasts shared features with each other, which did not occur in the other West Germanic languages (taken in a broad sense), such as palatalization of /k/ before most front vowels: thus Modern English *church* and Frisian *tjerke* (where the first consonant cluster is palatalized at /tj/, a very similar sound to the English /tʃ/) in comparison to Dutch *kerk*. These North Sea Germanic languages (often termed Ingvaemonic) also include, in a marginal sense, Dutch and Low German; its core is Anglo-Frisian, however. A feature which English, Scots, and Frisian share is the loss of /n/ in certain words, such as Scots *ither* 'other' in comparison to German *ander*-. What became Old English and Old Frisian appear also to have maintained some features shared with the North Germanic languages. The Scots vowel-initial forms of the verbs *be* (*am* and *er* 'are') are unknown in most West Germanic varieties but resemble the norm in North Germanic. In many ways this is unsurprising. As what became the English people (perhaps more accurately, their leaders) moved west and eventually onto the Island of Britain, the ancestors of the Danes appear to have taken over some of their territory in a perfectly amicable way. In the Old English epic *Beowulf* the Danes are called *Ingwinas*, which seems to be a descendant of the term *Ingvaeones*

given by Tacitus (in his second century *Germania*), to the peoples who lived in regions where Anglo-Frisian was eventually spoken. The movement of some speakers of this variety onto the Island of Britain from the fifth century on inevitably eventually sundered what became Old English and Old Frisian, although later evidence suggests that there was cultural and linguistic interplay between the Frisians living in what is now the Netherlands and the inhabitants of Kent in the far south-east of England well into the Middle Ages (see Dekkers 2017).

2.4 Old English dialects

There is a long-standing debate over whether the dialectal diversity found in written Old English (and, we can assume, spoken Old English) is a survival from distinctions between similar but discrete varieties spoken on the Continent (see, for instance, DeCamp 1969 and Bennett 1969). The latter view is supported by the historiography of the English Settlement of south-eastern parts of the Island of Britain in the period after the collapse of Roman power on that island in the fifth century. The eighth-century historian (and historiographer) Bede tells us that three distinct peoples settled on the island: Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, from different places along the North Sea littoral of the Continent. The Angles settled north of the River Thames over a considerable area which eventually included a large part of what is now southern Scotland, while the Saxons settled south of the Thames, as well as in the London and to its east. The Jutes settled on the Isle of Wight, Bede says, and in Kent. Earlier writers, such as Procopius of Caesarea, present a similar tripartite split, but with the Frisians being favoured over the Jutes as the third 'English' group.

There is, perhaps, some support for this schematization, no matter what created it. The vowel-initial forms of the present tense of the verb 'to be' already mentioned are, as far as we can tell, far more the norm in the Anglian dialects than in the Saxon and Kentish. But

it is equally likely that the original settlers were linguistically highly diverse and were not truly members of discrete 'nations'. Instead, group of adventurers are likely to have congregated around a particular leader before making the crossing. If that was the case, it could be argued that the English language, as we understand it, was not brought onto Britain as a single item. Instead it was brought into being in Britain through the mixture of different Germanic varieties, albeit with Anglo-Frisian predominant (Nielsen 1989).

Of course, the two arguments are not mutually exclusive. It is possible that the early dialects of English were brought into being not only by differentiated forms of Anglo-Frisian carried over by the dominant groups but also through the koineization of features from similar but discrete varieties in Britain (see Millar 2016a; see also Siegel 1985 and Kerswill 2001). It is impossible to know whether there was a koineization process—where a compromised, rationalized variety came into being as speakers of different but similar dialects accommodated towards each other, leading to there being one 'new' English—or whether there were several small-scale koineization processes affecting regional forms of the Ingvaeonic + mixture, with the products being similar but different. The three-way split in terms of origins, as put forward by various writers, is probably a schematization of a rather more chaotic situation at the time. Nevertheless, it matches fairly well the dialect situation realized in written Old English from the seventh century onwards, as shown in Figure [2.2](#).

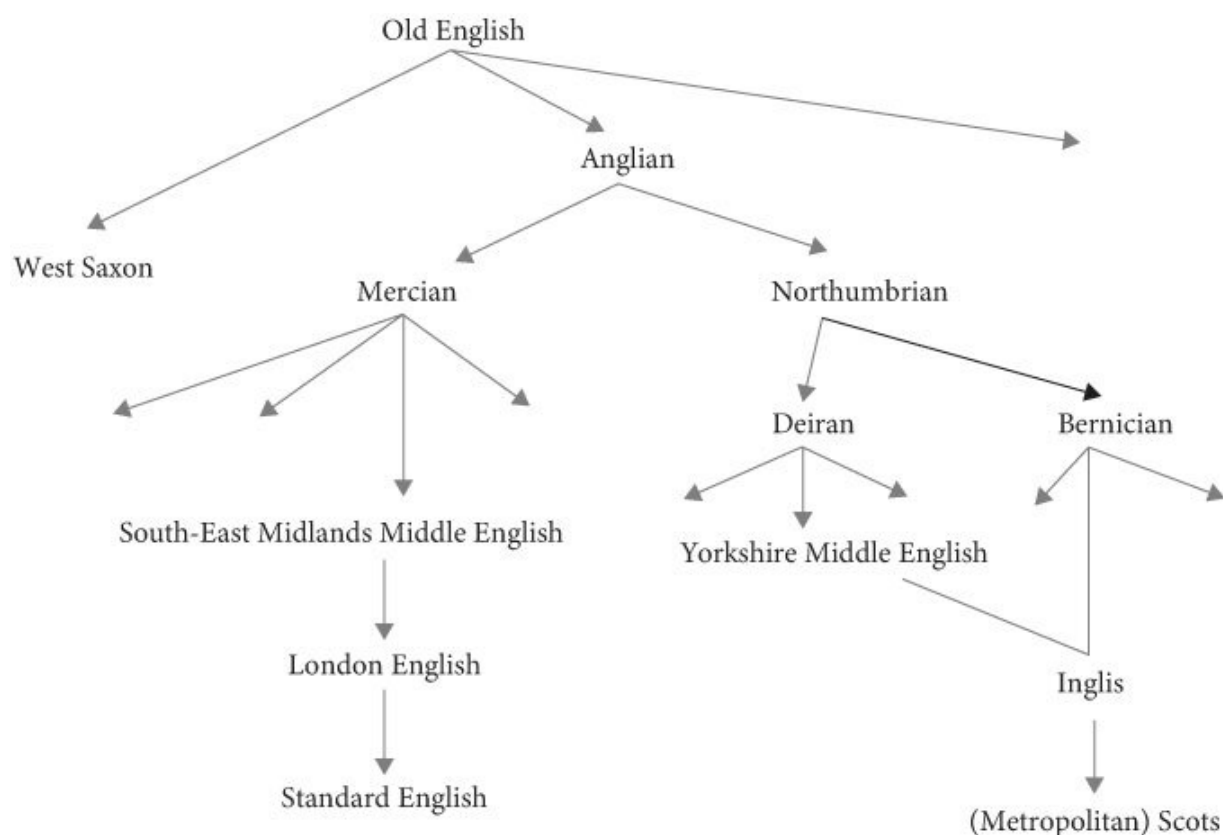


Figure 2.2 The ancestries of Standard English and (Metropolitan) Scots

It is necessary, however, to allow for a major caveat in relation to this schematization. Almost all Old English which has come down to us is in one dialect: West Saxon. The late Richard Hogg named a particularly insightful essay 'On the impossibility of Old English dialectology' (Hogg 1988). Beyond the West Saxon dialect, whose speakers became politically dominant in the early tenth century because of their association with the 'reconquest' of England from the Scandinavians, most varieties of Old English are known from a small series of corpora of local dialects or place names. Moreover, many of these are glosses to Latin texts. The influence of the second language always has to be borne in mind in terms of the 'authenticity' of the first language provided. Glosses also make it difficult to trace syntactic norms in particular. The glossator, when carrying out the task, may be thinking only in terms of one word or a small phrase, at the same time following in a loyal (perhaps too

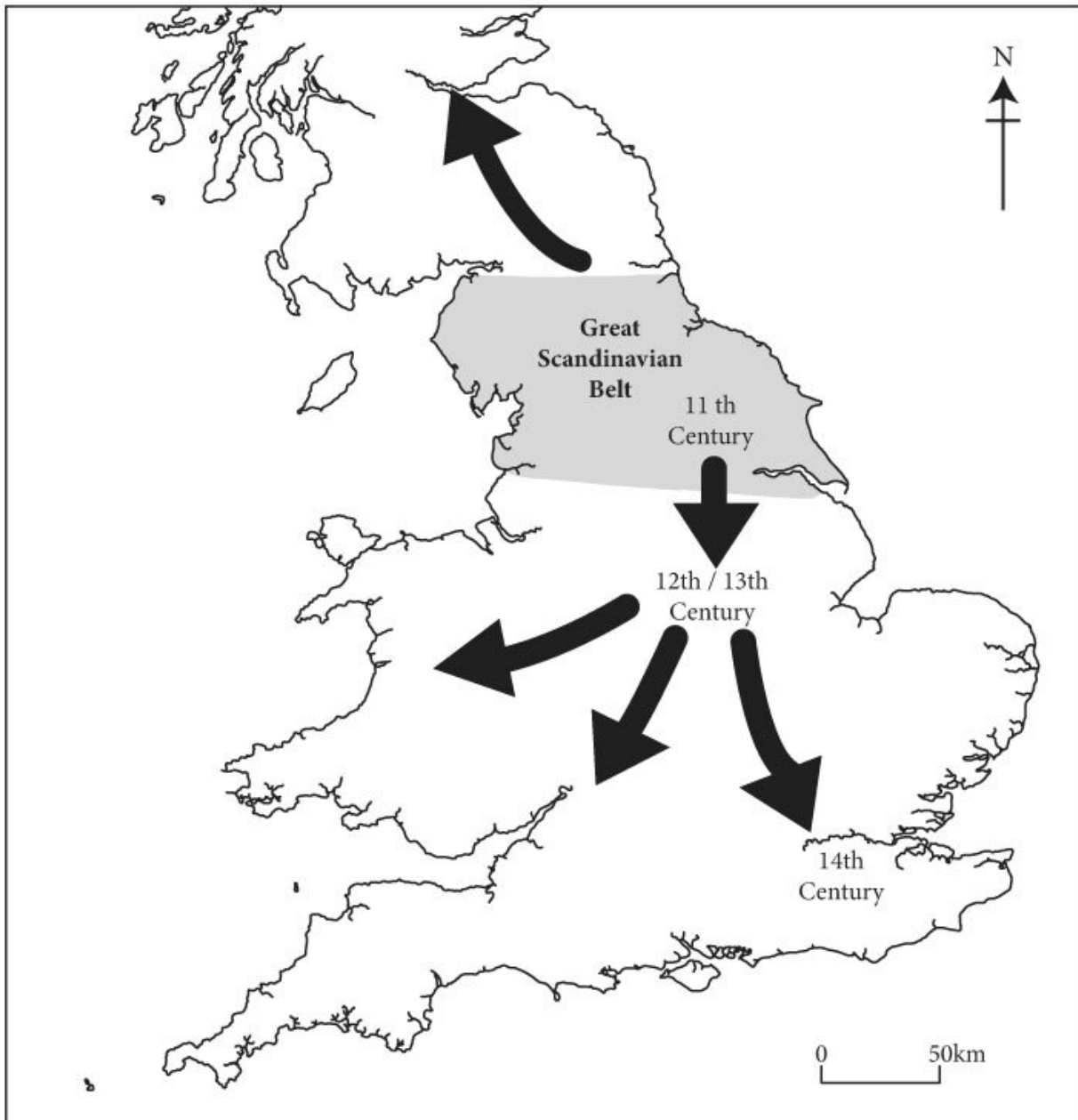
loyal) manner the structure of the original. Sometimes we have to base our identification of dialect on later evidence.²

Old Northumbrian is better evidenced than other dialects (with the exception, perhaps, of Kentish), in relation to extant documents which were not produced in the omnipresent West Saxon variety. What we have is sketchy, however: there are some early examples of the dialect, including the Ruthwell 'Dream of the Rood' (discussed below), the St Petersburg version of Caedmon's 'Hymn to God the Father' and a version of 'Bede's Death Song' (all composed either in the seventh or eighth centuries). The first of these is likely to represent a more northerly form of Old Northumbrian than do the other two. Linguistically, the Ruthwell runic inscription represents quite a conservative form of Old English, especially in relation to noun inflections (although some of the apparently conservative usage in that text may be archaistic rather than archaic; see Lass 1991).

Later Old Northumbrian texts are of rather greater length, but are practically all glosses of Latin material, a practice which makes it difficult to be sure whether what is realized accurately represents the structure of the language used in the glosses. The most famous of these is the English gloss to the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, written probably around 900 CE in Chester-Le-Street in County Durham by a *presbyter* called Aldred. Other texts include the gloss to the *Durham Ritual* (apparently also carried out by Aldred). Both texts are likely to represent more northerly forms of Old Northumbrian. More southern forms of the dialect from that period are not well represented, probably because of the chaotic forms of governance in 'greater Yorkshire' during the ninth and tenth centuries, so vividly described in Archbishop Wulfstan of York's early eleventh-century homily, *Sermo Lupi*. While the early Northumbrian materials are conservative in their morphosyntactic nature, the late Northumbrian texts are, as a rule, radical in relation to the same contexts. There is a general understanding among scholars that the evidence found in, for instance, the glosses to the *Lindisfarne Gospels* demonstrates the beginnings of the loss of grammatical gender and grammatical case,

a feature which spread into all dialects of English and Scots over the next 400 years.

This set of (considerable) changes has been explained in a number of different ways. Some scholars hold that their cause can be analysed as being system-internal or merely a particularly thorough-going example of a tendency in the Germanic languages towards moving away from a synthetic means of representing syntactic information (through the use of affixes to mark syntactic relations, for instance) to a more analytic one (where element order is used to identify the syntactic nature of elements within a clause). Other scholars hold to the idea that the primary spurs towards typological change were contact with speakers of Celtic languages; others with speakers of Viking Norse during the period of 'Viking' raids and settlement in 'greater Yorkshire' (what Samuels (1989b) describes as the *Great Scandinavian Belt*; see Map [2.1](#)) in the eighth and ninth centuries. I discuss and analyse all of these in my 2016 book. I tend towards the Norse influence scenario, primarily because the new system first begins to show itself in the north of England in the aftermath of the Scandinavian incursion. That does not mean, however, that any other explanation is wrong; this was a complex development which is likely to have had multiple causes.



Map 2.1 The 'Great Scandinavian Belt' and the spread of the 'new' typological system

What can be said, however, is that the changes involved appear to begin in northern England, before spreading into the Midlands, the south-west and, eventually, Kent, by the early fourteenth century. We do not know when these changes passed into what is now Scots. Given the fact that south east Scotland is physically close to the Great Scandinavian Belt, it is reasonable to assume that the

alteration came early. As we will see in Chapter [6](#), the earliest recorded forms of Scots provide some evidence for surviving grammatical endings. There is little or no evidence for even the remnants of grammatical gender or grammatical case, however.

2.5 Middle English dialects

We know a great deal more about the descendants of the Old English dialects. Essentially, Middle English dialects, as they appear in the often copious evidence, can be split into three parts: Southern, Midlands, and Northern. The last two are Anglian in origin, while the Southern dialects are primarily Saxon in descent. Kentish, while in some ways similar to Southern, realizes a number of unique features. These are large constructs, representing often strikingly discrete smaller units. Some idea of their geographical extent can be seen in Map [2.2](#).



Map 2.2 Middle English dialects

The following gives a brief summary of the features particularly associated with a group of dialects. It should be noted, however, that the phonological changes represented here were rather more complex when considered in detail, as we will do in relation to Scots in Chapter 5.

Northern (including Scots)

Lexis: high proportion of Scandinavian loan words

Structure: inflectional simplification/ rationalization from an early period

Present singular indicative: -es

Present plural indicative: -es

Orthography: /xw/ (possibly *ɹ*/ by the end of this period) spelled <qu> (north of England), <quh> (Scotland); vowel length is often marked by the use of <ī>, e.g., *heid* 'head'

Vowels: OE /y:/ unrounded to /i:/; /y/ to /i/ or /ɪ/. /e:ɔ/ monophthongized as /e:/; /æɐ/ as /ɛ:/; /eo/ and /æə/ as /ɛ:/; /ɑ:/ is fronted to /a:/. In Scotland and the north-east of England, /an/ is pronounced /ɔn/. OE and ON /o:/ fronted to /y: ~ ø:/

Texts include: *Cursor Mundi*, *Arthurs Awentyrs at the Tarn Wethelyn*, Richard Rolle; Barbour's *Brus*

East Midlands

Lexis: relatively high proportion of Scandinavian loan words

Structure: morphological simplification from a relatively early period

Present plural indicative: -es

Present plural indicative: -en

Vowels: OE /y:/ unrounded to /i:/; /y/ to /i/ or /ɪ/. /e:ɔ/ monophthongized as /e:/; /æɐ/ as /ɛ:/; /eo/ and /æə/ as /ɛ:/; /ɑ:/ is raised to /ɔ:/.

Consonants: in Norfolk texts, /f/ is often spelled <x>

Texts include: *Peterborough Chronicle*, *Ormulum*, *The Bestiary*

NB: London English is generally classified as being a South-East Midlands dialect

North-West Midlands

Lexis: relatively high proportion of Scandinavian loan words

Structure: morphological simplification from a relatively early period

Present singular indicative: -es

Present plural indicative: -en

Vowels: OE /y:/ unrounded to /i:/; /y/ to /i/ or /ɪ/. /e:o/ monophthongized as /e:/; /æ:a/ as /ɛ:/; /eo/ and /æa/ as /ɛ:/; /ɑ:/ is raised to /ɔ:/; /an/ pronounced /ɔn/

Consonants: /mb/ pronounced /mp/

Texts include: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Pearl*, (at the most southerly end of the dialect area) *Sir Orfeo*

South-West Midlands and Southern

Lexis: relatively low proportion of Scandinavian loan words

Structure: morphological simplification relatively retarded

Present singular indicative: -eþ

In South-West Midlands, present plural indicative: -en; in Southern, present plural indicative: -eþ

Vowels: OE /y(:)/ remains rounded, regularly spelled <u> (with the exception of North Dorset); /e:o/ monophthongized as /ø:/, sometimes spelled <eo>, sometimes <u>; /æ:a/ as /ɛ:/; /eo/ and /æa/ as /ɛ:/; /ɑ:/ is raised to /ɔ:/; In South-West Midlands, /an/ pronounced /ɔn/

Consonants: in many areas, /f, s, θ/ are voiced to /v, z, ð/ initially

Texts include: *Ancrene Riwe*, Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*, John of Trevisa

Kentish

Lexis: low proportion of Scandinavian loan words

Structure: morphological simplification retarded

Present singular indicative: -eþ

Present plural indicative: -eþ

Vowels: OE /y:/ unrounded to /e:/; /y/ to /ɛ/. /e:o/ remains diphthongized, probably as a rising diphthong /je:/; /eo/ as /je:/; /æ:a/ as /ja:/ and /æa/ as /ja/. OE /ɛ:/ is diphthongized as /ie/

Consonants: in many areas, /f, s, θ/ are voiced to /v, z, ð/ initially

Texts include: *Kentish Sermons*; *Agenbite of Inwyt*

This brief illustration demonstrates that the Northern dialects appear, in morphosyntactic terms, to be the engine for radical change across the English-speaking world. Their phonological nature is already considerably removed from the evidence attested further south. This separation would only increase over time. What should be noted in

particular is that the Northern Middle English dialects were different from the spoken (and written) dialects of the regions south of the Humber, not least in their treatment of Old English /a/ and Old English and Old Norse /o/.

If we focus on the Northern dialects, the broad-brush approach can be criticized as not truly representing a major distinction inherent in the area. We have already touched upon this: large areas in the southern part of the Northern dialect region, 'greater Yorkshire', as we will term them here, were rather more affected by Scandinavian invasion and settlement than the dialects to the north (which we can term *Bernician*, after the Northumbrian sub-kingdom based in that region). The original variety of English spoken in what is now Scotland was wholly Bernician in nature. Due to migration in the eleventh and twelfth centuries by English-speakers into Scotland (as discussed in Chapter 3), features were imported from 'greater Yorkshire'. In a sense, Scots represents a *koine* of these two varieties. Because the input varieties were close relatives, however, this koineization is less striking than is the case in, for instance, the variety of Hindi which developed from the disparate dialects spoken by Indian migrants in Fiji (Siegel 1987).

All the dialects mentioned above had literate expression in the Middle Ages. It would be inaccurate to claim that all written dialects were equal. As a result of its population in comparison to other urban centres in England, if nothing else, London dialect inevitably had greater social cachet and was also more likely to be available to readers beyond London in ways in which the other dialects were. But a writer of the calibre of the 'Gawain-poet', producing a complex, almost novelistic, poem, still wrote in a North-West Midlands dialect which is likely to have had relatively few speakers. His noble (or gentry) patron would also have spoken that dialect as his native tongue. Moreover, with poems which had a number of manuscripts copied in a range of locales across England, such as *Cursor Mundi*, we can see scribes altering the text to suit, if possible, their local dialect.

In the course of the fifteenth century London English spread as the primary written form across England, becoming *English*, the

standardized variety. While it would be wrong to say that writing in the other English dialects ceased immediately, those dialects lost a great deal of their status. No longer would they be used for official purposes. They had become 'mere dialects'.

Scots, however, a distantly related Anglian dialect, continued to be used as the primary language of the community in speech and writing. We will discuss these developments further in Chapter [3](#). A variety close to a standard, which Aitken (1979) terms *Metropolitan Scots*, was coming into being in the sixteenth century, based largely on the Edinburgh dialect of the socially elevated. The independent survival of Scots as a written language is due rather more to sociolinguistic (indeed sociocultural and sociopolitical) than it is to linguistic forces. Very similar dialects in the far north of England had very different fates from their Scottish sister.

The influence on Scots and its ancestors by the North Germanic languages is, as already discussed, evident in the morphosyntactic nature of all the descendants of Old English. These will be touched upon again in Chapter [6](#). The influence, indirectly and directly, of various North Germanic dialects upon the development of Scots lexis will be returned to in Chapters [3](#) and [7](#).

2.6 Conclusion

It is difficult when dealing with the early history of any language to avoid portraying (normally inadvertently) that history as an act of providence: as if there were something special and preordained about its history. In fact, this is rarely, if ever, the case, except where the creation of norms and standards of language become topics for consideration across a large part of an opinion-forming (and enforcing) class, as is the case in, for instance, ancient India and modern Europe. Even on these occasions, however, it is likely that we can easily over-estimate the importance human agency can have over a language's development. Scots, like English, is a product of essentially random forces, linguistic, sociolinguistic, and historical.

Nevertheless, what was made of the products of these changes is human to its core.

3

'Rise'

Scots in the Medieval and Early Modern periods

3.1 Scotland before Scots

Evidence for the linguistic history of Scotland is surprisingly deep in terms of time.¹ But, with the exception of the often brief narratives of a few scholars and travellers, generally from the Mediterranean basin, the primary evidence is based on place names, both presently and previously recorded. Most of these are Celtic in origin, although a small number might represent an earlier, non-Celtic (possibly non-Indo-European) reality. Many scholars believe that *Tay*, the name of Scotland's longest river, is not presently interpretable as being related to any existing or recorded languages.

Scotland first begins to be discussed first-hand by the literate inhabitants of the Roman Empire when, in 83 or 84 CE, Gaius Julius Agricola led an army into northern Scotland. According to Tacitus, Agricola's army achieved an annihilating victory over the *Caledonii* at a place called Mons Graupius (possibly Bennachie in Aberdeenshire, although other sites have been regularly suggested). A number of the Caledonian leaders named by Tacitus, most famously *Calgacus*, have Celtic names (Calgacus is likely to have been a fictional character; the origin of his name cannot be questioned, however).

The Insular Celtic languages (since the late Roman period the sole surviving varieties of a language family at one time spoken from the

Eurasian steppe to parts of the Iberian peninsula) are generally split into two sub-families. One is *Goidelic*, or *Q-Celtic*, represented today by Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Manx (the last of which lost its last native speaker in 1974). While these languages are not fully mutually intelligible, most speakers report a sense of kinship between their variety and the others which is significantly more obvious and closer than between, for instance, English and German. The other branch is *Brittonic*, or *P-Celtic*, represented today by Welsh, Breton, and Cornish (the final native speakers of the last died by, at the latest, the middle of the nineteenth century). As with the Q-Celtic languages, a strong sense of affinity is present between all the P-Celtic languages; nevertheless, Cornish and Breton are considerably closer to each other than either is to Welsh.

Although the two branches of Insular Celtic are similar in many ways to each other, including features such as initial consonant mutation as a marker of syntactic and noun phrase function, essentially unknown in any other Indo-European language, only trained linguists would be able to demonstrate with relative ease the relationships between them, primarily (although not solely) because of the phonological bifurcation which has taken place between the two sub-families. How long ago did this split take place? Given the level of difference, it would be reasonable to suggest a considerable time depth. Many scholars believe, however, that, at least at the time of the Roman occupation of southern Britain in the first century CE, the sundering was recent. There are some scholars who believe that the split is much more recent (a view which is highly contentious). Others believe that, in northern Scotland, the split was not complete until the last centuries of the first millennium (Schrijver 2014). What can be said, however, is that, from the earliest times reported by insiders or by informed outsiders, at least two different language communities existed in Scotland, one speaking a Q-Celtic language, the other a P-Celtic language. Other small-scale languages of other origins may also have been spoken, but we have little or no evidence for them.

In the earliest historical period, Scotland appears to have been inhabited by speakers of a range of Celtic languages. While these groupings were often culturally different from each other, they shared one common feature: none had been fully incorporated in the Roman Empire in the way experienced south of Hadrian's Wall. In what is now Scotland south of the River Forth lived speakers of a language often called British (although some term it Cumbric, distinguishing it from the British dialects spoken by inhabitants of the Midlands of England and Wales). A close relative of the ancestor of Modern Welsh, the presence of the British language can be demonstrated in placenames such as *Penicuik*, 'head of the cuckoo' (Midlothian) or *Abercorn* (West Lothian), probably 'mouth of the Cornie burn' (Fox 2007). A number of separate polities were present at one time or another in this region; a kingdom sometimes called Strathclyde, based around the Clyde valley and the upper Forth valley, is probably the best evidenced. To its east lay the lands of the people called the Votadini by the Romans. At some point in the sixth or early seventh century, warriors from this group, according to an early Welsh poem, *The Gododdin* (the Welsh form of Votadini), rode south to what is now North Yorkshire, where they were slaughtered in battle against a group who appear largely to have been English infiltrators into the northern parts of formerly Roman Britain.

To the north and east of the British speakers were speakers of Pictish. Much place-name evidence can be found for their presence; for instance, *Keith*, a town in Banffshire, has a P-Celtic name, meaning 'wood'. The name *Aberdeen* is also Pictish: (probably) 'mouth of (the River) Don'. Further up the Don, however, is *Inverurie* 'mouth of (the river) Urie', where the generic is Gaelic. Culturally the Picts were to a degree distinctive in relation to the Britons (although too much can be made of this); this distinction may primarily be due to a lower level of contact between them and Roman cultural and governmental and military models than was the case for the people to their south. Because of these differences, until recently most scholars believed that Pictish was a language at the very least separate from the British language; in a sense, more like a cousin than a sister, if that. Forsyth (1997) demonstrated, however, that

Pictish and British were, in fact, close relatives. More recent analyses have postulated something like a dialect continuum across the area, with there being no true 'border' between the two languages. We must bear in mind that Pictish was spoken over a large area, including Orkney and Shetland, is poorly recorded, and may actually have represented discrete varieties rather than dialects of the same language.

In an arc from Ardnamurchan down to the Mull of Kintyre (including the islands in that area) Q-Celtic dialects were (to some extent are) spoken, at that time part of a dialect continuum reaching north from the south of Ireland. Many scholars term this language Old Irish, although recently others have been happier with the term *Old Gaelic*. Many places which we would now consider the heartland of Gaelic in Scotland, such as Skye and at least the northern Western Isles, appear not to have been Gaelic-speaking at the time. The spread of Gaelic into these regions is likely to have taken place early in the second millennium.

3.2 Bernicia

From at least the early seventh century, south-eastern Scotland came increasingly under the control of speakers of Anglian dialects of Old English. These early speakers formed part of a kingdom named Bernicia, ruled from Bamburgh in northern Northumberland. Its cult centre lay nearby on the Holy Isle of Lindisfarne (in later times Bernicia and another Anglian-speaking territory, Deira, centred on the Vale of York, regularly became the united kingdom of Northumbria). While we cannot say how long the indigenous British languages survived in this area, there can be little doubt that Old English spread quickly. A state of bilingualism is likely to have existed for many people. Saint Cuthbert, for instance, was born, probably in the 630s, in Dunbar (East Lothian), although other scholars trace his origins to Melrose (Scottish Borders). He may well have spoken a

British dialect, but throughout his life, so far as we can tell, he moved in an English-dominant environment.

In the eighth to ninth centuries, Northumbria was a major power across northern Britain. English-speaking settlers moved into south-west Scotland, as place names like *Eaglesham* (Renfrewshire) and *Maybole* (Ayrshire) demonstrate (Nicolaisen 2001: 172). In Galloway, considerable influence at the very least was exercised by Bernicia. A particularly striking example of this is the great runic cross of Ruthwell in eastern Dumfriesshire, which contains a version of part of the great early English poem 'The Dream of the Rood'. The following is a representative excerpt, here derived from Dickens and Ross (1966: 26, with modern norms of transcription applied):

Ruthwell Cross

... ic riicnæ kyniŋc
hēafunes hlaford hælde ic ne dorstæ
bismēradu unŋet mēn bā ætgād[re] ic [wæs] miþ
blodæ [b]istemi[d] ...

'I raised up the powerful King, the Lord of heaven. I did not dare to topple. They humiliated us both together. I was soaked with blood, poured forth ...'

In the tenth-century version of the poem, found in the Vercelli Book, written in West Saxon dialect, the equivalent passage can be represented thus:

West Saxon

Āhof ic ricne Cyning
Heofona Hlaford; hydan me ne dorste.

...

ic hia ænigum sceððan
Bysmeredon hie unc butu ætgædre. Eall ic wæs mid blode bestemed.

'I raised up the powerful King, Lord of the heavens. I did not dare to topple over ... I did not dare to harm any of them. They humiliated both of us together.'

(Translations of both versions based on those of Bradley 1982: 5, 161)

From the outset it should be noted that the Old English of Bernicia is not the *sole* ancestor of Modern Scots, however. As we will see later

in this chapter, inputs from other dialects, not least that of Deira, southern Northumbria, had considerable effects on the development of the language.

From the seventh century onwards, invaders from Norway in particular brought their North Germanic dialects to the coasts of Scotland. Their language, later termed *Norn* 'northern', appears to have been spoken in the Northern and Western Isles, as well as along the northern and western coasts. This can be exemplified by place names, such as *Lacasdail* (*Laxdale*; Modern Norwegian *laksdal*) 'salmon valley' in Lewis and *Jura* (Modern Norwegian *djur øy*) 'animal island' in Argyllshire. Its speakers shared a common culture which ran from at least the Isle of Man to Shetland. In Shetland and Orkney (and, for a while, north-eastern Caithness) Norn continued to be spoken into the late medieval period and beyond.² Elsewhere, the language died out, leaving place-name evidence in many places. In the north and west it was replaced by Gaelic, probably brought into these regions as part of the mixed Gaelic-Norse culture of the 'greater Irish Sea' world. Similar patterns of invasion and settlement (on this occasion overwhelmingly by Danes) in large parts of Yorkshire, northern Lancashire and what is now Cumbria (the combination of which termed *greater Yorkshire* in this book) had linguistic repercussions for the later history of Scots. What should be noted, however, is that Norse settlement in and Norse influence upon Bernicia (and indeed most of Scotland) was relatively weak in comparison with those recounted here. Norse influence on most dialects of Scots is secondary and was passed on by contact (whether first hand or at a remove) with speakers whose dialects *had* been influenced directly.

3.3 A united kingdom

From the tenth century on, large parts of what is now Scotland came to be ruled by the one king (a large part of this kingdom was called *Alba*, the name given to Scotland in Gaelic today). The king's

subjects south of the Forth probably did not think of themselves as being from Alba proper: some would have analysed themselves as 'English under the rule of the King of Scots'. Representatives of all the languages mentioned would have lived in these territories. Over time, however, the power relations between the different communities began to change.

Within the new kingdom it is very likely that, at least to begin with, the largest number of people spoke Pictish. Pictavia, the kingdom of the Picts (if such an entity existed; at the very least regional warlords within the territory were often autonomous to the point of independence) was certainly the largest single part of the country. Yet it was Gaelic which eventually triumphed in the north, in the medium term at least. By the twelfth century, if not considerably earlier, few if any speakers of Pictish remained in its former heartlands. We will never be certain why this happened, but it seems likely that shifts in power, the dominance (including in the Church) of a Gaelic-speaking class and the change of focus within the kingdom towards the Forth Valley, Fife, and Lothian made the situation of Pictish highly vulnerable. Similar processes were at work on the British of Strathclyde, with the last native speakers of the latter language being dead by at most the end of the twelfth century. On this occasion, however, the ancestor of Scots may, in some places, have been the direct beneficiary of this shift.

Both the former Pictish-speaking areas and the south-west, where there were strong ties to Ireland and the Isle of Man, became and remained strongly Gaelic into the High Middle Ages; evidence suggests that Gaelic continued to be spoken in the more isolated parts of Galloway until at least the seventeenth century (see, for instance, Lorimer 1949–1953). In the south-east, however, Old English is likely to have remained the speech of the people, although there is some evidence that at least some members of the elite learned the king's language.

3.3.1 Gaelic and the Church

Gaelic may have been carried to other parts of the country through the spread of Christianity. While there is some evidence for Christianity coming into what became Scotland (in particular the South and the Lowlands) from a variety of sources in the seventh century, in particular from Bernicia, these were largely secondary to earlier missions. While it is entirely possible that residual forms of Christianity remained in southern Scotland as part of their having been territories on the edge of the collapsing, already Christianizing, Roman Empire, it was through missionaries from Ireland (itself evangelized by missions from Britain) that the religion took hold in the Gaelic-speaking parts of Scotland in the sixth century.

This is primarily associated with the foundation of the monastery of Iona by St Columba, generally dated to 563; there is some evidence of other Irish missionaries working in western Scotland in the same period, however. From an early point, Gaelic-speaking missionaries were active in Pictish-speaking (and, later, British- and Anglian-speaking) territories. It can be assumed that these missionaries would have learned the local languages, but the peculiar use of Gaelic in the Church in some written contexts, both sacred and secular, unlike most other vernacular languages at the time, is likely to have led to its having some cachet outside its core area.

This ecclesiastical influence over Scotland was increased when, in the context of the Scandinavian attacks on the Scottish west coast, the Iona congregation moved its centre to Dunkeld in the Tay valley, with St Andrews becoming a major cult centre.

3.4 The creation and spread of *Inglis*

Eventually, however, it was the Germanic vernacular which became dominant in a large part of the country. The reasons for this sea-change in linguistic dominance (and, eventually, use) from Gaelic to what became Scots from the late eleventh century on are complex, but the following may give some sense of what underlay them.

Often³ given as the primary reason for the spread of 'English' and the retreat of Gaelic from southern and central Scotland is the marriage of Mael Coluim III (Malcolm Canmore) to St Margaret, an English princess and refugee after the Norman Conquest of England in 1066–1067 (her brother, Edgar Atheling, was the last rightful king of England). According to old stories, tapped into by Shakespeare, Mael Coluim was said to have taken refuge at the court of Edward the Confessor in England when Macbethad mac Findlaech (Macbeth) seized the throne. This suggests that he would have learned a considerable amount of English, making communication with his wife easy. More modern analyses, however, suggest that Mael Coluim actually spent his exile in Orkney, which would suggest that he actually learned to use Old Norse (indeed his first wife was a Norse princess).⁴ Given that he ruled a comparatively fertile area—Lothian—where Old English was the primary language, it is eminently possible that he had at least some knowledge of the local language even before his second marriage, however.

What can be said, nevertheless, is that the strategies employed by Mael Coluim and his descendants altered significantly the previous economic, political, and social orientation of Scotland. While it would be a mistake to say that relations between Scotland and Norman England had become straightforward, given that the latter kingdom was both far richer and more powerful than the former, English ways became increasingly important to the ruling elite in Scotland. At the same time power shifted to the south and east, with Stirling, Dunfermline, and Edinburgh becoming important to the Margaretsons and their descendants. It is very likely also that these had native-speaker level English as their mother (but not necessarily sole) tongue, which would make both England and the former Bernician territories in Scotland increasingly attractive. What is striking is that, with one exception, the family quickly abandoned its use of Gaelic names, instead choosing English (*Edgar*), French/Western European (*William* or *Henry*), classical (*Alexander*), or common Judaeo-Christian names (*John*). A conscious action of

reaching out to, and assimilating, to the norms of a wider Christendom was taking place.

Bartlett (1993) describes these changes as bringing the European periphery (the Christian parts of Spain, the Czech and Polish lands, Hungary, Scandinavia, and Scotland) into line, culturally, politically, and economically with the 'Frankish' centre in the basins of the Rhine, Mosel, Maas-Meuse, Marne, and Seine. In the case of Scotland this was particularly important, since its pre-medieval economy, largely not monetary, had to be brought in line with its neighbours; otherwise, there was a danger that these neighbours would take control. Norman England was particularly aggressive, as its eventual seizure of power across Wales and parts of Ireland demonstrated. Scotland needed to be able to put a well-armed and provisioned army in the field.

Whether as a conscious programme or not, the Scottish monarchy began to encourage 'Norman' noblemen and gentry settled largely in England and Wales (whose ancestors might actually have come from Picardy or even Flanders) to settle in southern and central Scotland.⁵ While the native aristocracy rarely appear to have had their lands removed from them, the 'Normans' had an almost supernatural ability to marry well (most of the claimants to the Scottish throne in the 1290s were descended from incomers who married heiresses). The new money-based reconfiguration of Scottish society was welcome to many, however.

New ways of carrying out trade in the new cash-based economy encouraged the setting up of *burghs*, founded either by local grandees or by the king himself. These represented protected places of exchange, often fortified, where specialist trades could be developed. They are the primary basis for the development of the later towns. Their foundations were particularly successful in central and southern Scotland (matters were more complex in the North, as we discuss below). Given the speed with which these changes were carried out, it was inevitable that specialist traders and craftsmen, speaking languages other than the local one, should be imported from elsewhere (this also happened in the Polish, Czech, and

Hungarian lands). In Scotland, many immigrants came from the Low Countries and northern Germany, bringing with them their Dutch and Low German dialects. Their presence is still demonstrated by a number of family names, including *Bremner* (often reconstructed as 'man of Brabant', a province of what is now Belgium, although 'man of Bremen', a large port city in northern Germany, is also a possible interpretation) and *Fleming*. Many Dutch and Low German borrowings are also present in Scots, although it is sometimes difficult to decide from which period they stem, given the close connections which have always existed around the North Sea. Eastern Scotland and the Northern Isles were integrated into a North Sea and Baltic world well into the modern era, The Hanseatic league, at its height in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, took a particular interest in Scotland (we will discuss these influences further, in relation to Dutch and Low German borrowings into Scots, in Chapter [Z](#)). The other large-scale immigration was from northern England; in particular, Yorkshire.

3.5 Formation of *Inglis*

It is also around this time that these Anglian dialects begin to be represented in writing in Scotland. Essentially this begins with placenames and a few notes in Latin charters and related material connected with property rights. It is difficult to reconstruct fully what happened linguistically and sociolinguistically in the spoken Anglian variety (or varieties) at that time. Because of later evidence, however, it is likely that various types of language mixture were ongoing during this period. As has already been stated, the development of the burghs and their related activities led to immigration from England (and beyond), with the greatest concentration of immigrants coming from the 'greater Yorkshire' area. These immigrants' English would have been rather different from the Bernician variety spoken in the south-east of Scotland, and quite probably in pockets across the central and southern parts of

the country.⁶ A primary difference between these dialects would have been the level of Norse influence present. The greater Yorkshire variety inevitably had more Scandinavian-derived lexis and phonology than the more northerly dialect. From a linguistic point of view, this second English input is of some importance. Modern Scots is not a direct descendant of the Bernician dialects spoken in south-eastern Scotland. It shows linguistic features derived from the presence of this new northern English.

Modern Scots can therefore be claimed to be a *koine*, derived from two similar but distinct sources and the compromises which followed the initial contact. Speakers of the original Bernician dialect were involved in the creation of the burghs: inevitable, perhaps, given their experience of living in an economically 'progressive' part of the country. We can now term this product *Inglis*.

In most of central and southern Scotland outside the Bernician heartland, the burghs were for a considerable period English-speaking islands in a Gaelic-speaking sea. It is very likely that many of their inhabitants had some Gaelic, possibly of the 'kitchen Spanish' type which English-speaking inhabitants of the south-west of the United States learn in order to communicate with their employees. But the surrounding Gaelic-speakers would also often see the economic and social advantages of learning the language of the incomers. By the twelfth century it is likely that *Inglis* was spreading, at least in the centre and south, into the rural hinterlands of the burghs.

3.6 The Wars of Independence and their aftermath

Throughout this book we will regularly concentrate on the possible regional differentiation between the different territories now becoming *Inglis* dominant. But a feature shared by speakers of all varieties existent at that time (some, such as Insular and Ulster Scots, would, of course, develop at a much later date) was ongoing

strife aimed both against English occupation of considerable parts of the most fertile and economically developed territories in the country and forms of civil war fought out between family interests which ranged across considerable parts of Scotland from the north-east to the south-west: the Wars of Independence. Running in fits and starts from 1296 to 1357, this set of interlocking conflicts was of a different sort in several ways from earlier ones because it involved the creation of what might be termed national armies with a definite popular orientation, unlike the tribal or feudal forces which preceded it.

This was particularly true under the leadership of Sir William Wallace, who was martyred in London in 1305. Wallace came from a village close to the heart of the power base of the family who would become known as the Stewarts. He would have been able to speak *Inglis*. It is likely to have been his mother tongue. At the time, Gaelic would probably have been spoken within a fifteen kilometre radius of Elderslie; it would be surprising if he did not have at least *some* knowledge of that language. We know also that he had some facility with French.

The campaigns of the early stages of the wars were highly mobile affairs, with armies moving along Strathmore, the great central valley of the Lowlands, with considerable ease. The valleys through the Southern Uplands were also used as a means of raiding and then retreating. Covering considerable ground through areas which were inevitably destabilized is likely to mean that people would have come into contact with people from other parts of the country more readily and regularly than would otherwise have been the case.

Their language use would have been affected by this. It is likely that, in many parts of the Lowlands, influences from the burghs and dislocation through war sounded the death knell for Gaelic in all but the most marginal areas, such as central Fife. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the creation of an awareness of shared national identity is likely to have led to the perception of *Inglis* as a national language.

3.6.1 Scots and Gaelic in long-term cohabitation: The development of the Northern dialects

Beyond the central and southern regions, however, the new world of the burghs took far longer to establish itself.⁷ In the North East, for instance, it was only really on the coast, as with Aberdeen, or in particularly fertile areas, such as the Laigh of Moray, centred around Elgin, a major economic centre, that the burghs and their initially imported populations thrived. Elsewhere in the region the burghs did not rapidly assume an economic dominance over the countryside. Let us take Inverurie as an example. Inverurie was a place of some strategic importance, where the River Don is joined by its tributary the Urie. Yet there is little evidence from the later Medieval and Early Modern periods of the burgh's hinterland being brought into economic or linguistic line with the new trading reality. Indeed, there is some evidence that citizens of the burghs went 'native'; particularly when there was dearth, or even famine. To the south, the opposite was the case, which suggests that, in the North, little surplus created by the new economy was available to the burgh. Strikingly, there is evidence that, in the seventeenth century, some of the burgh's baillies (the most senior figures in the administration of the burgh after the provost) were illiterate, something practically unknown to the south. Gaelic remained as a spoken language until the twentieth century within a fifty-kilometre radius of the burgh (Millar 2020: 4.6). Although we have rather less evidence, we can assume that similar linguistic ecologies pertained within the other Northern Scots dialect areas (with the proviso that, in the case of Caithness, the possibility of language change through direct Norse contact must always be considered). What happens to Scots along the Gaelic fringe?

3.6.1.1 The Gaelic 'fringe' and the development of Scots: An excursus

Contact between Scots and Gaelic, except perhaps in Caithness, is often downplayed in the literature, despite the fact that the boundary between the eighteenth-century Gàidhealtachd and those areas where Scots was (and largely continues to be) spoken is lengthy and 'snakes' across Scotland, not necessarily (although often) following the major geographical barriers of the country. In Braemar on upper Deeside in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for instance, the boundary between the two languages ran along an insignificant burn; the split may have been created rather more as the result of doctrinal than geographical barriers, the Protestant and Catholic parts of the village being essentially discrete.

There is, of course, a core of Gaelic vocabulary found in most or all Scots dialects (including sometimes Ulster Scots, along with inevitable Irish lexical transfer in that context), as discussed in Chapter 7. This tends, however, to be related to cultural issues (although most lexis is cultural in one way or another), such as *tocher* 'bride price, dowry'. At a local level along or near the Highland Line, however, this influence is more various. In my native traditional West Central dialect, the main word for 'bonfire' is *taunle*, apparently derived from a Gaelic word referring to a ceremonial bonfire. Renfrewshire is not normally associated with Gaelic influence (except, of course, through immigration). But Argyll and the islands of Buteshire are no distance from Lochwinnoch (where my mother grew up and from where a large part of my linguistic input derives). Furthermore, Gaelic speakers, whether native to the town or long-term immigrants, lived in Largs, a seaside town in northern Ayrshire, in considerable numbers well into the twentieth century. The Gàidhealtachd is closer than we are taught to think. As I have suggested on a number of occasions (see, for example, Millar 1996 and 2004b), the true boundary between the two languages in many places was, well into the modern era, less geographical than social. In a sense this is a textbook example of how gradual language shift takes place sociolinguistically.

Similar distributions of lexical borrowings can be found in Stirlingshire and Perthshire and beyond. But even a considerable number of Gaelic borrowings could still be seen as 'local colour';

transfer of lexis does not really affect the receptor language materially. Albanian, for instance, remains Albanian despite the largely non-Albanian origins of its lexis. But the further north along the Gàidhealtachd line we travel, the less patina-like the influence of Gaelic upon Scots becomes.

The change from /m/ to /f/ in the North East and Caithness is a perfectly normal one, albeit not as common as some others. But despite the organic nature of the change, the contact-induced change which I believe underlies it is rarely utterly unexpected; it is certainly never 'unnatural' (whatever that means). What marks it off, I believe, is that potential changes which would otherwise be considered less likely to reach fruition are permitted, perhaps even encouraged.

Gaelic has neither /w/ nor /m/, but does have /ɸ/, a voiceless bilabial fricative, as an adequate substitute for the latter, the possibility of change occurring due to problems of attaining native-like production with the consonant by Gaelic-dominant bilinguals. For whatever reason, remnants of this change were carried over into the speech of Scots-dominant bilinguals (and, indeed, monolingual speakers of the latter language). There is also considerable Irish evidence for similar phenomena, some contemporary—I have a colleague from Co. Cork who exhibits this phenomenon, but watching any Irish talk show, where <wh> words will inevitably be common, provides a sense of how widespread it is. The alternation in the name of the twentieth-century Irish writer, born (John) *Whelan* but known as (Seán) *Ó Faoláin*, also illustrates this. It is not unreasonable to see the shared phenomenon having similar roots in the two countries, even if there is no 'smoking gun'.

This does beg the question, however: why did these changes not take place in other places along the 'Highland Line'? The first answer (although it must be recognized as a sketchy one) is that there may, in fact, be a small amount of evidence that this change was found further south and west. In his *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), for instance, James Hogg has a gaoler in Edinburgh pronounce the <wh> words with /f/:

'Fat the deil are ye yoolling an' praying that gate for, man?' said he, coming angrily in. 'I thought the days o' praying prisoners had been a' ower. We hath rowth o' them aince; an' they were the poorest an' the blackest bargains that ever poor jailers saw. Gie up your crooning, or I'll pit you to an in-by place, where ye sall get plenty o't.'

'Friend,' said I, 'I am making my appeal at the bar where all human actions are seen and judged, and where you shall not be forgot, sinful as you are. Go in peace, and let me be.'

'Hae ye naebody nearer-hand hame to mak your appeal to, man?' said he. 'Because an ye hae-na, I dread you an' me may be unco weel acquaintit by an' by.'

I then opened up the mysteries of religion to him in a clear and perspicuous manner, but particularly the great doctrine of the election of grace; and then I added: 'Now, friend, you must tell me if you pertain to this chosen number. It is in every man's power to ascertain this, and it is every man's duty to do it.'

'An' fat the better wad you be for the kenning o' this, man?' said he.

'Because, if you are one of my brethren, I will take you into sweet communion and fellowship,' returned I. 'But, if you belong to the unregenerate, I have a commission to slay you.'

'The deil you hae, callant!' said he, gaping and laughing. 'An', pray now, fa was it, that gae you siccan a brow commission?'

'My commission is sealed by the signet above,' said I, 'and that I will let you and all sinners know. I am dedicated to it by the most solemn vows and engagements. I am the sword of the Lord, and Famine and Pestilence are my sisters. Woe then to the wicked of this land, for they must fall down dead together, that the Church may be purified!'

'Oo, foo, foo! I see how it is,' said he. 'Yours is a very brow commission, but you will have the small opportunity of carrying it through here. Take my advising, and write a bit of a letter to your friends, and I will send it, for this is no place for such a great man. If you cannot steady your hand to write, as I see you have been at your great work, a word of a mouth may do; for I do assure you this is not the place at all, of any in the world, for your operations.'

(Hogg 2002 [1824]): 103–4)

We are not told where the gaoler comes from, so it would be dangerous to make too much of this.

Another problem presents itself, however. Why do modern speakers of the Northern dialects not use the Gaelic phoneme, instead apparently substituting the native Scots equivalent /f/? Again, it would be difficult to construct a completely watertight argument for this, but possible explanations do exist. Perhaps most

strikingly, a small amount of evidence is available for a rather more Gaelic-influenced Scots in the North East in the early eighteenth century than is evidenced in any of the modern varieties. A letter to his father in Scotland purporting to come from an early eighteenth-century immigrant from Culloden (Invernesshire) to Maryland, but written by someone from the Formartine of Aberdeenshire, represents a radical and unexpected representation of North-East Scots at the time. Here are two paragraphs (the whole letter can be found in Millar 1996; the excerpt contains a racial epithet which was commonplace at the time):

Teer Lofen Kynt Fater:

Dis is te lat ye ken, dat I am in quid healt, plessed be Got for dat, houpin te here de lyk frae yu, as I am yer nane Sin I wad a bine ill, leart gin I had na latten yu ken tis, be kaptein *Rogirs* skep dat geangs te Innernes, per cunnan I dinna ket anither apertuniti dis Towmen agen. De skep dat I kam in was a lang tym o de see cumin oure heir, but plissit pi Got for a'ting wi a' kepit our Heels unco weel, pat Shonie *Magwilivray* dat hat ay sair heet. Dere was saxty o's a' kame inte te Quintry hel a lit an lim an nane o's a' dyit pat Shonie *Magwillivray* an an otter *Ross* lad dat kam oure we's an mai pe dem twa wad a dyit gin tey hed bitten at hame.

...

Mi Mestir seys til mi, fan I kon speak lyk de fouk hier dat I sanna pe pidden di nating pat gar his plackimors work, for de *fyf Fouk* dinna ise te work pat te first year aftir dey kum in te de Quintry. Tey speak a' lyk de Sogers in Inerness.

Dear loving, kind father,

This is to let you know, that I am in good health, pleased be God for that, hoping to hear the same from you, as I am your own son I would have been badly brought up if I hadn't let you know this, by Captain Rogir's ship which goes to Inverness, in case I do not get another opportunity again this twelvemonth. The ship that I came in was a long time on the sea coming over here, but pleased be God for everything we all maintained our healths very well, except for Shonie Magwilivray who always had a headache. There were sixty of us all came into the country hale in lith and limb and none of us all died except Shonie Magwillivray and another Ross lad who came over with us and maybe those two would have died if they had stayed at home.

...

My master says to me, when I can speak like the folk here that I will not be told to do anything except make his blackamoors work, for the white people are not accustomed to work except the first year after they come into the country. They all speak like the soldiers in Inverness.

(Punctuation and emphasis as in the original. A discussion of the authenticity of this letter can be found in Millar 1996.)

Were two Scots dialects present in central and upland Aberdeenshire at this time, with the more directly Gaelic-influenced variety possessing considerably lower prestige than another, more prestigious, variety, closer to more southern prestige norms? The former would have been the speech norm of the smaller peasantry and of farm servants. If this social stratification was present and it did have linguistic repercussions (much more difficult to evidence), why would speakers of the more prestigious variety assume marked elements of the less prestigious variety? Do we have evidence here for the expression of regional or local 'identity'? Was the peculiar history of the North-East, with Gaelic speakers being present for longer in its heartland than further south and the burgh-based economic expansion which kick-started the spread of *Inglis* in central Scotland much more patchily successful and considerably later in the North, the catalyst for these developments? The change to /f/ may be due to an originally Gaelic reinterpretation of pronunciation being itself reinterpreted by Scots speakers who did not consider the sound they were hearing ([ϕ]) to be phonemically distinct from /f/.

Caithness Scots actually contains a few further features of this type, not least the merger of /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ (so that *cheese* and *she's* are homophones). These very likely represent transfers from Gaelic-dominant bilinguals (although, as we will see in Chapter 5, this change did occasionally manifest itself elsewhere in Scotland during the Early Scots period) into the Scots of those locals who did not speak Gaelic. A 'backward transfer' might also be possible: final /t/ is *always* voiced as /d/, as in *hid* 'it'. Being far removed geographically from the mainstream of both languages may be at the heart of the favouring of changes of this type, but the long close coexistence suggested is thought-provoking in relation to the long-term distrust

(and even disdain) felt by both linguistic communities of the county towards the other.⁸

3.7 Growth of writing in *Inglis*

At least until recently, scholarly analysis of the rise of *Inglis* as a written language was primarily based upon its use in literature. This flowering of a literary tradition of some importance is undoubtedly a central issue in the history of the language, and we will deal with this shortly. The shift from Latin to Scots as the primary means of providing information, making claims and proclaiming law was instrumental in increasing the status of the vernacular in the central, official, sphere (a point illustrated well by the sources of information discussed in Kopaczyk 2013a). This, I would argue, would have had more impact than poetry. Literate people in Scotland would know at least some Latin and probably some French, but *Inglis* became the language of record for all (except to some degree in the Gàidhealtachd). Royal proclamations, laws, burgh records, and personal correspondence (such as survives) was written in the language, strikingly in different registers, depending on the topic and the level of formality (see, for instance, Smith 2012: Chapter 4). It is this broad swathe of use in a range of different domains which suggests strongly that *Inglis* (in the Edinburgh form of court and parliament) was becoming a standard language (or at least a *synecdochic* dialect, to follow Joseph's formulation in his 1987 book). This is demonstrated in particular by the development of a spelling system (or something close to a system) discrete from that employed in Standard English. This change was not so prominent in the earliest recorded *Inglis*, suggesting that the specifically Scottish system was at least a semi-conscious adoption. Despite this, however, Standard English remained a part of many literate people's reading and use (Smith 2013: 148–9).

3.8 The literary road: The apex of *Scottis*

From around the second half of the fourteenth century, we begin to have evidence of a strong literary tradition using *Inglis*, most notably in the *Brus* by John Barbour (ca. 1320–1395), written in the 1370s. The poem, a heroic romance based on the life of King Robert I (reigned 1306–1329), appears to have had a patriotic purpose, reminding the court of Robert II (reigned 1371–1390), the first Stewart king, during a period of considerable discontent and corruption within the country, that there had once been a time when the King of Scots and the great landholders had been focussed on one purpose. We have little or no evidence for earlier literature in the language, although the ability Barbour displays, and some of the stories he tells in his work, suggest a connection to a vernacular tradition of song and verse now lost to written records (if it was ever recorded at all). The beginning of the poem is (rightly) famous for its first line: ‘O fredom is a noble thing’.

More connected to the literary norms of the time is *The Kingis Quair*, traditionally said to have been written by King James I (Robert II’s grandson; reigned 1406–1437). The spelling system in this work is often seen as being rather more Anglicized than is the case for other writers of *Inglis* (although the phonology underlying it is generally unquestionably Scottish) (Smith 2012: 148–9). This usage may be partly autobiographical: James spent a considerable part of his reign as a hostage in England. Due to this, he married a close relative of the English king (indeed their courting is the poem’s theme). Chaucer and his contemporaries had a profound effect on all Scottish writers; living at the heart of England, not long after Chaucer’s death, this influence may well have been greater for James. The *Kingis Quair*, it could be argued, was to a degree divorced from the vernacular ‘folk’ tradition. Blind Harry’s *Wallace*, on the other hand, written later in the fifteenth century, derives much of its force from just such a tradition (although its extant versions appear heavily Anglicized). It was particularly influential on later Scottish writers.

The great 'summit' of Scottish literature in *Inglis* comes at the end of the fifteenth and in the first part of the sixteenth centuries. It was associated with a number of named writers, some of whom were of considerable importance beyond being writers in a society which was rarely at peace either internally or externally. With those for whom we have a sizeable corpus, we can analyse the language used as being connected to the register with which the poem is associated, running all the way from 'gutter' invective, as in *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*, where Dunbar (active in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries) mocks Kennedy for his Gaelic-speaking background (he came from southern Ayrshire):

ersche brybour baird, wyle beggar with thy brattis,
Cuntbittin crawdoun, Kennedy, coward of kynd,

...

Thy trechour tung hes tane ane Heland strynd,
Ane Lawland ers wald mak a bettir noyis.

Irish [alternatively 'Highland'] vagabond bard, vile beggar with your ragged children [alternatively 'with your children'], cunt-bitten craven Kennedy, coward by nature; ... your treacherous tongue has taken on a Highland strain —a Lowland arse would make a better noise.

through to an elevated approach—*aureate diction*, a 'golden' way of speaking and writing intended to impress and delight (see Smith 2012: 43, 53). A striking example of this stylistic convention can be found in the following two stanzas from a macaronic poem, no doubt intended for Easter celebrations, again written by William Dunbar:

The grit victour again is rissen on hicht,
That for our querrell to the deth was woundit;
The sun that wox all pale now shynis bricht,
And, derkness clearit, our faith is now refoundit;
The knell of mercy fra the heaven is soundit,
The Christin are deliverit of their wo,
The Jowis and their error are confoundit:
Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro.
The fo is chasit, the battle is done ceis,
The presone broken, the jevellouris fleit and flemit;

The weir is gon, confermit is the peis,
The fetteris lowsit and the dungeon temit,
The ransoun made, the prisoneris redeemit;
The field is won, owrecomen is the fo,
Dispuilit of the treasure that he yemit:
Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro

The great victor is again risen into the heights, who for our quarrel was wounded to the death; the sun which waxed all pale now shines brightly, and, darkness cleared, our faith is now refounded; the knell of mercy is sounded from heaven, the Christians are delivered from their woe, the Jews and their error are confounded: *The Lord has risen from the tomb.*

The foe has been vanquished, the battle has ceased, the prison broken, the Gaolers frightened and displaced; the war is gone, the peace is confirmed, the fetters loosened and the dungeon emptied, the ransom paid, the prisoners redeemed; the field is won, the foe is overcome, despoiled of the treasure that he guarded: *The Lord has risen from the tomb.*

There are occasions where the low register material appears to evince a more 'modern' form of language, such as with the apparent loss of /l/ in a number of contexts (for a discussion across all contexts and genres, see Molineaux, Kopaczyk, Maguire, Alcorn, Karaiskos, and Loos 2019). In high register contexts, however, although the spelling remains generally native, the underlying phonology appears to be from English (for instance, in the following poem he has southern English *gois* 'goes' (admittedly following Scots spelling norms) rather than native *gais*. This is in line with the way in which Dunbar appeared to see the poetic tradition from which he derives his methods, as represented in the following (an excerpt from 'Quhen he wes sek', otherwise known as 'The Lament for the Makars'):

I se that makaris among the laif
Playis heir ther pageant, syne gois to graif;
Sparit is nocht ther faculte;
Timor mortis conturbat me.
He hes done petuously devour,
The noble Chaucer, of makaris flour,
The Monk of Bery, and Gower, all thre;
Timor mortis conturbat me.

...
Holland and Barbour he hes berevit;
Allace! that he nocht with us levit
Schir Mungo Lokert of the Le;
Timor mortis conturbat me.
Clerk of Tranent eik he has tane,
That maid the Anteris of Gawane;
Schir Gilbert Hay endit hes he;
Timor mortis conturbat me.
He hes Blind Hary and Sandy Traill
Slaine with his schour of mortall haill,
Quhilk Patrik Johnnestoun myght nocht fle;
Timor mortis conturbat me.

...
Gud Maister Walter Kennedy
In poynt of dede lyis veraly,
Gret reuth it wer that so suld be;
Timor mortis conturbat me.
Sen he hes all my brether tane,
He will nocht lat me lif alane,
On forse I man his nyxt pray be;
Timor mortis conturbat me.

I see that poets, among the rest, play here their pageant, then go to their grave; their faculty is not spared; *The fear of death confounds me.* He has piteously devoured the noble Chaucer, of poets the flower, the Monk of Bery, and Gower, all three; *The fear of death confounds me.* ... Holland and Barbour he has bereaved; alas! That Sir Mungo Lockert of the Le no longer lives with us; *The fear of death confounds me.* He has also taken Clerk of Tranent, who composed the *Anteris of Gawane*; he has ended Sir Gilbert Hay; *The fear of death confounds me.* He has slain Blind Harry and Sandy Traill with his shower of mortal hail, which Patrik Johnnestoun could not flee; *The fear of death confounds me.* ... Good Master Walter Kennedy lies in truth at the point of death, great sadness it would be that so it should be; *The fear of death confounds me.* Since he has taken all my brothers, He will not let me live alone, I must needs be his next prey; *The fear of death confounds me.*

Although most of the writers he mentions are Scottish (for some of whom, sadly, this is the only evidence we have), at the head is Chaucer.

3.8.1 Scottis

To some writers of that period, however, the autonomy of the Scottish variety appears self-evident (despite their somewhat ingenuous claims of inferior knowledge). Particularly striking is this excerpt from Gavin Douglas' prologue to his translation of the *Aeneid*, *Eneaydos*:

And ȝit forsuyth I set my bissy pane,
As that I couth to mak it braid and plane,
Kepand na sudroun bot our awyn langage,
And speikis as I lernyt quhen I was page.
Nor ȝit sa cleyn all sudron I refuses,
Bot sum word I pronounce as nyghtbouris doys:
Lyke as in Latyn beyn grew termys sum,
So me behufyt quhilum or than be dum
Sum bastard Latyn, French or Inglyss oyss
Quhar scant was Scottis—I had nane other choys.
Nocht for our tong is in the selwyn skant
But for that I the fowth of langage want

(as quoted in Jack 1997: 244).

And yet in truth I set my busy pen as I could to make it broad and plain, permitting no Southron [i.e., English] but instead our own language, and speak as I learned when I was a boy servant. Nor yet so completely do I refuse all Southron, but some words I pronounce as our neighbours do: just as in Latin some terms have been developed, so I had to use some bastard Latin, French or English where Scots was wanting or then be silent—I had no other choice. Not because our tongue is wanting in itself, but rather because I myself do not possess the full fruitfulness of language

This appears also to be the first time that Scots is termed *Scots* (although the use of *Irish* in various spellings for Gaelic, rather than the earlier *Scottis*, is found in earlier writers, most notably Dunbar in *The Flyting*, as we have seen). One of the central ironies of this is that Douglas (1474–1522), bishop of Dunkeld and relative to the king, a major political player, himself favoured closer ties—even union—with England (Blakeway 2015: 33).

3.9 Standardization and lexical change

In his 1987 book, Joseph provides a model for how to analyse all linguistic standardization processes. The stages of standardization he proposes are of considerable complexity. In this discussion it is not necessary to review all of Joseph's model (interested readers might wish to consult Millar 2005). It is important to consider, however, two of the stages in his standardization model: *emerging standard* and *mature standard*.

Using the history of the English language as an example, we can say that the present nature of Standard English can be classified as *mature*; this has been the case since the beginning of the eighteenth century. Like all languages, lexical items cease to be used or are added to the corpus of the language (their meanings might also change). But these processes are carried out in a slow and steady way except, perhaps, where changes in society or technology inspire rapid word coinage, word borrowing, or adjustment in meaning of previously existing lexis, as with the prodigious growth (and equally quick popularization) of information technology from the 1980s onwards. While it is unlikely that any mature standardized language has sufficient lexis to describe all possible beings, things, states, and processes, the development of the lexical system to carry out these tasks is controlled (whether officially or not, whether consciously or not) and unhurried.

Moreover, many users of mature standards can be critical in relation to what they might see as 'unnecessary innovation', often portrayed in relation to social and political views either the critic or the innovator holds. If the websites of organizations such as The Queen's English Society are perused, it becomes apparent that conservative cultural and political values are often combined with conservative views in relation to language. Many political radicals would share many of these concerns and attitudes about language with them, however. There is an English 'in the mind of God'.

Five hundred years ago, English had an *emerging standard*. Much more lexical experimentation was possible. Shakespeare's work, for

instance, demonstrates a greater level of lexical variation and coinage than is the case with all but the most experimental artists today. The classical languages were mined for new descriptive and abstract materials and concepts, partly through need, but also through a desire to impress.

At the same time both conservative and radical individuals and groups argued about the future direction of the language: nativists supported using the native lexical material of English before any thought was given to borrowing from other languages. Radical innovators stood for borrowing as a fundamental part of the development of the language. Both parties mocked the other 'side', although pastiching those who favoured a particularly elaborate flavour for English lexis was more commonplace than any equivalent lampooning of nativist practice. Particularly apt for satire were those who practised *ynkhorning*, the use of Latinate words and phrases which had barely (if at all) been introduced into the English language as accepted borrowed lexis. It was a practice designed to highlight the learned nature (as the person using the style believed at least) of the user, rather than serving a straightforward exchange of information. To be fair, many of those who favoured large-scale borrowing of Classical lexis into English were also embarrassed by *ynkhorning*.

Since Modern Scots is not standardized, why is this issue brought up? In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Scots was, to all intents and purposes, behaving like an emerging standard. Let us consider this brief excerpt from Dunbar's 'Hymn to the Virgin':

Haile! sterne superne. Haile! in eterne,
In Godis sicht to shine.
Lucerne in derne for to discerne
Be glory and grace divine.
Hodiern, modern, sempitern,
Angelicall regine,
Our tern inferne for to disperne,
Helpe! rialest rosine.
Ave! Maria, gracia plena

...

Hail! highest star. Hail! For eternity, in God's sight to shine. Light in secret
able to be discerned by glory and divine grace. For today, at the present time,
for ever, angelical queen, to dispel our infernal term, Help! Most royal rose.
Hail Mary, full of grace

Much of the lexis employed in this poem is, we can assume, mainstream for the Scots of the time, with native (or Norse, if it is possible to distinguish between them by this point) Germanic vocabulary predominating, along with some French material of an everyday nature.

But the use of Latinate vocabulary to give a heightened sense of awe depends upon the employment of neologisms (or at least rare words). To native speakers of Scots not from an educated or elite background, the poem would have been (and is) rendered opaque by lexical choice. In other ways, however, the use of Latin in the liturgy of the time gives the work force, even if not fully understood.

What we have here is an example of linguistic experimentation, a self-conscious literary employment of words and phrases (note the Romance/Latinate element ordering in *sterne superne*) known to the author (and to a lesser extent, perhaps, by his audience). Similar patterns can be found in 'Done is the battail' by Dunbar, discussed earlier in this chapter.

While the corpus is rather small for making strong assertions, literary evidence from the sixteenth century supports the idea that literary experimentation was a spur to the use of learned and, for many Scots speakers of the time, somewhat obscure, lexis. Some of these appear to be close to nonce words. In other contexts, such as legal or burgh records, lexis which appears to have been heightened in its connotations is also regularly employed. Accuracy in particular terms and terminology may have been perceived. The Roman law basis of Scots law might have encouraged the use of Latin lexis and Latinate structures. But a primary purpose behind such word choice must be the presentation of *glamour*, of the might and omnipresence of the Law and its practitioners and their near-exclusive right of interpretation.

Given the lacuna in the use of Scots in literature from the early seventeenth century to the first decades of the eighteenth century, and bearing in mind the different social backgrounds of the later than earlier exponents of Scots, it is not surprising that much of the inventive lexical choice and use demonstrated in the Renaissance was not generally employed in their work, even if many of them had some knowledge of earlier literature. The Latinate culture of education in Scotland continued, however. By this point, however, that, with the exception of some legal and educational terminology, the borrowing which took place were shared with Standard English.

In a sense, therefore, Middle Scots as a written variety demonstrated many features of an emerging standard: *Metropolitan Scots*. Unlike English, however, a native mature standard did not develop; literate Scots speakers adopted wholesale the originally alien Standard English as their model for normal usage.

3.10 Conclusion

By 1525, Scots was a major language of record and literary endeavour (a combination which, as I suggest in my 2010 book, provides the written form of a language vitality to spread). As we have already seen, Aitken termed this variety *Metropolitan Scots*. But even at the height of the status of Scots as a national language, there was considerable confusion over the sociolinguistic relationship of Scots to English. It was non-linguistic variables which fed this unease about status in the years following this 'peak', however, as the Kingdom of Scotland descended into chaos and economic collapse.

4

Scots in decline? The Modern Age

4.1 'Decline and fall'?

It is tempting to see the history of Scots after about 1560 as a matter of 'decline and fall'; tempting, perhaps, because there is some truth to such a view. This chapter will not contest many of the ideas inherent in these attitudes. It will ask, however, whether they form the only treatment possible. Is the mainstream analysis of the evidence entirely trustworthy?

4.2 Sixteenth-century crisis

While some of the most impressive and globally significant literature ever written in either Gaelic or Scots was created in the sixteenth century, that century was not a happy one for the country as a whole. In a period when royal authority was perceived as being intrinsically connected to a country's stability, periodic but regular minorities were inevitably damaging to Scotland, as were two catastrophic defeats in war with England, a generation apart. Ignoring the ideological conflicts which sometimes underlay primarily elite dissent during the period, individual or collective regencies gave free rein to personal ambition among elements of the royal family

and the higher nobility. Pleas for unity were interspersed with an increasingly centrifugal reality. Inevitably, the Scottish economy suffered greatly.

Coupled to these issues was the Scottish response to the Protestant Reformation (as discussed in Todd 2002). In most parts of northern Europe, the shift to the new faith was relatively painless. The king and his council decided on the shift; this was relayed to the people as fiat. Most people, no doubt, hardly noticed.

The process of Reformation in Scotland was strikingly different from most of 'Latin' Europe (for a general treatment, see Linberg 2010). Protestantism as a presiding ideology came late to the country. It only became the established faith of Scotland in 1560–1561, while Luther began to establish his own Church from 1517 on, Calvin became openly Protestant in 1535–1536 and, closer to home, Henry VIII of England broke with Rome between 1534 and 1536, setting up a personally controlled, although not entirely Protestant, state Church. The Scottish Reformation also arrived radical and was actively opposed by elements of the ruling class. In addition, it also changed the orientation of a large section of literate Scots away from the continent (in particular, France) towards England.

These changes were not universally loved. A number of Scottish thinkers and controversialists retained their ties with Catholicism, particularly as the Church began its own reformation process from the late 1540s on. While it would be wrong to make too much of this, the considerable bitterness which these changes engendered had a linguistic dimension.

It might be tempting (and, indeed, such an argument has regularly been made) to suggest that Standard English as a written medium became associated with radical Protestantism in Scotland, while Scots became associated with Catholicism and the developing forms of Episcopalianism, in particular in northern parts of the country. There is, in fact, some truth to this assertion, although it is dangerous to make too much of it.

Let us consider arguably the central figure in Scottish radical Protestantism, John Knox (died 1572). He and his followers were associated with strict adherence to the Calvinist interpretation of

Christian theology and to a Presbyterian form of Church government which was at least perceived as being opposed to existing forms of secular (as well as religious) authority. Knox was in many ways unusual for a Scot of his time: he had lived for a considerable period in England, being, at one point, a chaplain to Edward VI, as well as spending time in exile in Geneva and later Frankfurt with Protestant English refugees. He had maintained a strongly Reformed tenor (using English) through his assistance in the composition of the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer*. His first wife was English. It would be natural to consider him Anglophile; Anglophone tendencies are also present in his writing (although there are modulations between Scots and English in his work). It is likely that he was also unusual among his compatriots in not only being able to understand spoken English but also to reproduce it in a convincing manner. Given his experience outside Scotland, he could be defined as approaching native-speaker status with English.

Let us compare, therefore, the language use, in the first instance, of John Knox and then that of the Catholic controversialist, Ninian Winzet (died 1592):

So by Act of Parliament it was maid free to all man and woman to reid the Scriptures in their awin tounge or in the Engliss tounge.¹

So by Act of Parliament it was made free to every man and woman to read the Scriptures in their own tongue or in the English tongue.

John Knox, *History of the Reformation* (1556; Bald 1928: 165)

Gif ȝe, throw curiositie of nouationis, hes forȝet our auld plane Scottis, quhilk ȝour mother leirit ȝou, in tymes coming I sall wrytt to ȝou my mynd in Latin, for I am nocht acquyntit with ȝour Southeron.

If you through curiosity of innovations have forgotten our old plain Scots, which your mother taught you, in the future I shall write to you in Latin, for I am not acquainted with your Southern.

Ninian Winzet, *An Open Letter to Master John Knox* (1563; Bald 1928: 165)

We could construct an argument based on the level of denseness of Scots they use, with Knox's Protestant writing leaning much closer to English than do his adversaries. This view is apparently supported by

the language used by another Catholic writer, John Hamilton (died 1611):

Gif King James the fyft war alyue, quha hering ane of his subiectis knap suddrone declarit him ane trateur: quhidder wald he declaire you triple tratoris, quha not onlie knapis suddrone in your negatiue confession, bot also hes causit it be imprentit at London in contempt of our natiue langage?

If King James the Fifth were alive, hearing one of his subjects affect Southern, declared him a traitor: in what way would he declare you triple traitors, who not only mouth Southern in your negative confession, but also have caused it to be printed in contempt for our native language.

John Hamilton, *To the Calvinolatre Ministeris* (1581; Blank 2002: 154)

It must be borne in mind, however, that these distinctions are not absolute, as can be seen in the writings of King James VI himself (a Protestant, in name at least, but one who favoured Episcopalianism for ideological reasons). Before his accession to the English throne, he exhibited considerable command of a literary Scots which was rather 'dense' in its usage:

For albeit sindrie hes written of it [poetry] in English, quhilk is lykest to our language, yit we differ from thame in sindry reullis of Poesie.

For albeit sundry people have written of it [poetry] in English, which is most alike to our language, yet we differ from them in sundry rules of poetry.

King James VI, *Reulis and Cautelis* (1585; Arber 1869: 54)

The primary issue is not with the language use of one person, however. We have to approach elements of Protestant ideology as a whole. Protestantism grew out of a discomfort with the idea of there being discrete people—priests—who had the right to interpret the Word of God in a way that was denied to the congregation as a whole. Moreover, the (Catholic) priesthood, according to this interpretation, portrayed themselves as having a different and special relationship with God in contrast to their congregations: they were intermediaries. Most forms of mainstream Protestantism did not abandon the idea of leadership within the Church. In most traditions, however, these new leaders were not envisaged as priests but rather ideologically correct ministers and preachers. Luther spoke of the 'priesthood of all believers'. This appears to have been

envisaged as the doctrinal presidency within a household of its head (as portrayed sentimentally by Burns in 'The Cottar's Saturday Night', published in 1786). In practice, of course, worry about doctrine led, except in the most radical traditions, to this being seen as the ideal, rather than the normal, dispensation. But if interpretation was to be localized, this meant that scripture had to be brought closer to those who, while presumably literate, did not have the special knowledge, such as the in-depth understanding of Latin, which the priesthood—or, indeed, Protestant academics—had. This meant vernacularization.

Vernacularization had its own issues, however. While Low German speakers in northern Germany (and elsewhere in the Baltic basin and beyond) received a Bible translation in their own language in the early years of the Protestant Reformation, speakers of Norwegian did not. The Danish Bible was the sole authorized version until the end of the nineteenth century, in fact: God spoke Danish, thus placing the King's variety before popular comprehension.

This same superposition need not have happened in Scotland. But it did. Producing even a mediocre Bible translation takes a considerable amount of effort and input of capital. It is not just that the text itself is lengthy and that any translation demands knowledge of at least Greek and Hebrew (although translators regularly also use other translations as 'cribs'; see Tulloch 1989). Years of civil war (or at least societal discontent and dissent), along with inflation and other severe economic hardships, left Scotland essentially incapable of developing this independent text, although a number of attempts were made. Moreover, many of the reformers—not just Knox—were used to the English language as at least a written medium. Moreover, controversialists often prefer writing in a variety with a larger potential readership than for a smaller one. Using English permitted this. The English Bible, whether the Geneva translation (1557–1560) or the later Authorised Version of 1611, was introduced and enforced across non-Gaelic Scotland (in a striking analogy, Gaelic speakers had to make do with an Irish translation until the late eighteenth century). God spoke English; with a few exceptions (unlike Norway and several other places in Europe), this

state of affairs continues. A small-scale counter-example can be found in Robinson (1983); see also Tulloch (1989).

4.3 Union

There had been a strain of Unionism running through elements of the Scottish elite since the High Middle Ages. This was echoed (and sometimes supported materially) by the English authorities, who did not relish having an independent (and not necessarily benevolent) entity on their northern border. Even writers with strong connections to the promotion of Scots as a national variety, such as, as we have seen, Douglas, favoured at least closer governmental ties with England. Other members of the elite were far less favourably disposed to these ideas, often favouring the French alliance, perceived as a counterbalance to the population differences between Scotland and England. These often visceral disagreements need not have contributed to the Anglicization of Scots; it is likely that they did, however.

Given the relative wealth of England in comparison to Scotland, it is unsurprising that many members of the Scottish upper nobility and the merchant classes in particular favoured some kind of closer relationship with their southern neighbour. These views were shared by the King. When Elizabeth Tudor died in 1603, James VI was the nearest by relationship to the English throne. James left Scotland with considerable haste and only rarely returned to his homeland. Although, from what we can tell, James remained a Scots speaker until his death (indeed, his eldest surviving son, Charles I, had a Scottish accent), he certainly self-consciously began to write in Standard English; he even translated one of his earlier writings in Scots into English (see, for instance, Görlach 1991: 310–12).

This represents the usage of one man, no matter how powerful and influential, of course. He could not have forced all literate users of Scots to switch to English in their writing. But James did not make this change alone. Many members of the higher nobility went with

him, often on the look-out for eligible heiresses. In an age when patronage was central to the development of the arts in Scotland and elsewhere, this removal of elite support for writing of the language produced palpable effects, not so much on the speech of the people but on the written use of the literate. In order to gain a wider audience under the new dispensation, poets and other writers had to turn to English. This unequal relationship, where Scots ceased to have anything more than a toehold in relation to high prestige written activities, had inevitable knock-on effects on everyday written language use, at first written but later spoken.

4.4 Anglicization of writing

Seminal accounts, including Devitt (1989) and Meurman-Solin (1993) suggest that, as the seventeenth century proceeded, written Scots became gradually Anglicized. Spelling conventions changed. Grammatical features which marked off a text as Scots were often replaced with more Southern usage (although this was more subtle, given that the distinctions between these varieties in this case were not so great as at other levels of the language). Specifically Scottish lexis survived better and longer, as can still be seen today in the otherwise very English language contexts of Scots law and its generally upper-middle-class proponents and interpreters. Strikingly, different levels of intimacy and formality between writer and receiver altered the level of 'Scottishness' in the text. Formal correspondence and material intended for the public record generally contained far fewer Scottish features than was the case with private correspondence (or, often, personal notes). Age, inevitably, also affected usage: older people tended to be more Scottish in their writing than their younger peers. Place was also a factor: people from the north of the country often wrote in Scots for longer. By the end of the century, the language used by most writers was essentially indistinguishable from that of Standard English.

The tendency towards Anglicization was nearing completion in all contexts for all writers. 'Hangovers' of unconscious use of Scots elements in writing certainly continued into the first decades of the eighteenth century, nevertheless. This cannot be analysed as being an underground attachment to the old patterns, however. Levels of literacy certainly contributed, but so did levels of familiarity. Having said all this, nevertheless, written use is unlikely to have affected spoken use for the great majority of Scots speakers during this period. People who rarely, if ever, wrote (or even read) in any variety would have continued using their native language in all contexts (except, perhaps, in relation to the language of the Church, although, even here, this would be largely passive in its nature). Even those who did write are likely to have developed a personal dichotomy between speech and the written form, rather than shifting over entirely to the spoken use of the latter. Conversely, it would be naïve to suggest that there was no influence between one and the other, with the politically and economically dominant language probably contributing more overt influence. Nevertheless, the acceptance of an external form in place of a local form as norm in one medium would inevitably lead to leakage, if not imposition, of norms in the other.

4.5 'Improvement' and Anglicization in writing and speech

This move towards Anglicization in writing in the seventeenth century developed into a trend towards Anglicization in speech in the middle and late eighteenth. This change affected very few people immediately and did not necessarily wipe out the ability to speak Scots in those who wished to 'perfect' their Standard English.

At least from the Union of the Parliaments of 1707 onwards, governance of the country, with the exception of the Law and the Church, was transferred to London. This is likely to have been far advanced in economic matters already: England was much richer

and more populous by far than Scotland. Ambitious Scots of many different backgrounds moved south temporarily or permanently. For reasons of commerce and comprehension, most, if not all, of these would have shifted to English as their normal spoken medium. The fact that Scottish immigrants were rarely popular in their adopted home would often have encouraged this replacement (see, for instance, Rounce 2005). Whether such a changeover would have had much influence over language use in Scotland is questionable, however. Long-term separation, where communication would have been inevitably periodic and largely written, need not necessarily have facilitated convergence for those 'at home'.

Seasonal movement is likely to have been different in its results, however, at least in terms of the Scottish elite. The desire to take part in the political process of the new state (albeit in a rather more constrained way than had been the case when power and preference were concentrated in Edinburgh) in order to further personal, family, and regional interests (to be frank, to help 'feather the nest') drew many south for at least a few months each year. The 'London season' directed families to London and further encouraged intermarriage in the upper echelons of society (the remains of this process can still be seen in the multinational plethora of surnames presently used by the Scottish aristocracy). Again, language shift is inevitably prevalent in these circumstances. This elite is likely to have been rather more effective in affecting language use among elements of the population in Scotland than had been the case with the usage of migrants to England from a rather more lowly background.

People whose language use is affected by temporary (but ongoing) migration will almost inevitably have some effect on other inhabitants of their 'home' territory. This effect would have been multiplied when it was carried out by members of the elite. The numbers of people involved in the primary contact and convergence would inevitably have been small. Their social standing as pathfinders and leaders of societal norms would have had considerable effects on language use among the middle classes,

however, even when, as must normally have been the case, the latter group rarely, if ever, travelled into England.

Linguistic 'improvement' became a fashionable pastime in the cities of Scotland in the middle of the eighteenth century. Teachers (whether qualified or not) from around the English-speaking world came to Edinburgh in particular to promote the 'perfection' of English among first the upper middle classes and then their lower-middle-class followers. Much of this teaching was provided in lecture format which, I suspect, may not have been particularly effective; the point was to be seen at such events, perhaps. Lists of 'Scotticisms'—largely lexical but also occasionally morphosyntactic—were compiled, printed and disseminated well beyond Scotland. In fact, they often morphed into 'Americanisms' to avoid (see Beal 1997 and Dossena 2005). Possibly conditioned by the fear felt by Lowland Protestants for the largely Gaelic-speaking supporters of the restoration of the legitimate (but Catholic) Stuart lineage to the throne, culminating in the occupation of Edinburgh by Jacobite forces in 1745–1746, many among the educated were pushed towards England and English speech during the period.

4.6 'Vernacular Revival'

Ironically, Scots returned as a literary language at the same time it was being forced down as the default linguistic code of the urban middle classes. From around the time of the 1707 union, poets (who were also often booksellers and archivists of a range of types; for further discussion see Smith 2020; see also Angus-Butterworth 1969) began writing in Scots. While many of them knew (and admired) earlier literature in Scots, there had been a sea change in terms of topic, medium, and representation (as well as, as we will see, in the language itself). Probably the most famous of these innovators was Robert Burns (1759–1796); this should not in any way detract from the achievements of his predecessors, whose work (and subject matter) was central to his development as a poet.

Much of Burns' poetry is so well known that it is difficult to analyse his language use from first principles. With this in mind, the following is an occasional (and excellent) poem, about which until very recently I was unaware, related to an incident which took place in the Scottish Highlands in 1786. Landlords and other members of the ruling class of the territories frustrated the desires of local people to emigrate to Canada of their own volition (ironically, within a few years these same elites were encouraging—if not impelling—local people to leave their ancestral lands):

To the Right Honorable The Earl of Breadalbane, President of the Right Honorable and Honorable the HIGHLAND SOCIETY, which met on 23rd May last, at the Shakespeare, Covent Garden to concert ways and means to frustrate the designs of FIVE HUNDRED HIGHLANDERS who, as the Society were informed by Mr. M'Kenzie of Applecross, were so audacious as to attempt an escape from their lawful lords and masters whose property they were, by emigrating from the lands of Mr. Macdonald of Glengary to the lands of CANADA, in search of that fantastic thing — LIBERTY.

LONG LIFE, My Lord, an' health be yours,
Unskaith'd by hunger'd HIGHLAN BOORS!
Lord grant, nae duddie, desp'rate beggar,
Wi' durk, claymore, or rusty trigger
May twin auld SCOTLAND O' A LIFE,
She likes—as BUTCHERS like a KNIFE!
Faith, you and Applecross were right
To keep the Highlan hounds in sight!
I doubt na! they wad bid nae better
Than let them ance out owre the water;
Then up among thae lakes an' seas
They'll mak what rules an' laws they please.
Some daring Hancocke, or a Frankline,
May set their HIGHLAN bluid a ranklin;
Some Washington again may head them,
Or some MONTGOMERY, fearless, lead them;
Till, God knows what may be effected,
When by such HEADS an' HEARTS directed:
Poor, dunghill sons of dirt an' mire,
May to PATRICIAN RIGHTS ASPIRE;

Nae sage North, now, nor sager Sackville,
To watch an' premier owre the pack vile!
An' whare will ye get Howes an' Clintons
To bring them to a right repentance,
To cowe the rebel generation,
An' save the honor o' the NATION?
They! an' be damn'd! what right have they
To Meat, or Sleep, or light o' day,
Far less to riches, pow'r, or freedom,
But what your lordships PLEASE TO GIE THEM?
But hear me, my lord! Glengary hear!
Your HAND'S OWRE LIGHT ON THEM, I fear:
Your FACTORS, GREIVES, TRUSTEES AN' BAILIES,
I canna say but they do gailies;
They lay aside a' tender mercies
Frightan awa your deucks an' geese;
Get out a HORSE-WHIP, or a JOWLER,
The langest thong, the fiercest growler,
An' gar the tatter'd gipseys *pack*
Wi' a' their bastarts on their back!
Wi' COMMON LORDS ye shanna mingle,
The benmost newk, beside the ingle
At my right hand, assign'd your seat
'Tween HEROD'S hip, an' POLYCRATE;
Or, if ye on your station tarrow,
Between ALMAGRO and PIZARRO;
A seat, I'm sure ye're weel deservin 't;
An' till ye come—your humble servant,

BEELZEBUB. Hell 1st June Anno Mundi 5790

Long life, my Lord, and health be yours, unharmed by starving Highland farmers! Lord grant that no ragged, desperate beggar, with knife, claymore [the highland long sword] or rusty trigger, may deprive old Scotland of a life she likes—as butchers like a knife! Faith, you and Applecross were right to keep the Highland dogs in sight! I believe that they would be no better when you had allowed them just this once out over the water; then up among those lakes and seas, they'll make what rules and laws they please. Some daring Hancock, or a Franklin, may set their Highland blood rattling; some Washington again may head them, or some Montgomery, fearless, lead them; until God knows what may be carried out, when directed by such heads and hearts: poor dunghill sons of dirt and blood, may aspire to patrician rights; no wise North or wiser Sackville to watch and lord over the vile pack! And where

will you get Howes and Clintons to bring them to a correct repentance, to cow the rebel generation and save the honour of the nation? They—and be damned—what right have they to food, or sleep, or light of day, far less to riches, power or freedom, but what your lordships are pleased to give them? But hear me, my lord! Glengary, hear! Your hand is too light on them, I fear; your factors, greives [gamekeepers], trustees and baillies [property defenders and enforcers], I cannot say that they do anything in its full measure; they lay aside all tender mercies and tear off their rags to the hairs; yet while they are only stripped of their possessions and harried, they'll keep their stubborn highland spirit. But smash them! Crush them all to smithereens! And rot the rascals in the gaols! The young dogs, flog them to the labour, let work and hunger make them sober! The hussies, if they're at all pretty, let them be schooled in Drury Lane! And if the wives and dirty brats come begging at your doors and gates, fluttering their rags and grey with vermin, frighten away your ducks and geese; get out a horse-whip, or a jowler, the longest thong, the fiercest growler, and make the tattered gypsies go forcibly home with all their bastards on their back! Go, my lord! I long to meet you and in my house at home to greet you; with common lords you shall not mingle, the furthestmost corner, beside the fire, at my right hand, assigned your seat, between Herod's hip and Polycrates; or, if you are fastidious about your station, between Almagro and Pizarro; a seat, I'm sure, you well deserve it; and until you come—your humble servant,

Beelzebub, Hell. 1 June *Year of the World* 5790.

Most of the poem is, of course, written in, not necessarily particularly dense, Scots. The spelling system, however, is essentially English-based, with a few exceptions, such as *bluid* 'blood'. Consider this couplet:

Some Washington again may head them,
Or some MONTGOMERY, fearless, lead them.

It is only the demands of the rhyme scheme which tells us that *head* is likely to be Modern Scots /hid/ (or /hed/, depending on dialect: Burns would have said the former; his father, who must originally have been a South Northern speaker, is likely to have said the latter) rather than Scottish Standard English /hed/. <gh> can be read as either the English marker of lengthening and diphthongization generally present before a now 'lost' consonant or as Scots /x/. Most strikingly, the use of the apostrophe in *a'* 'all' represents the

vocalization of /l/ in particular texts in Modern Scots (for more discussion, see Chapter 5). This last feature in particular has an economic function: it tells the general English-speaking reader that a feature is 'missing' in Scots but found in English; it also presents Scots as being in some ways aberrant English, however, which may not have been helpful in maintaining both the discrete identity and status of Scots (too much can be made of this point—in its most extreme form it encourages a paranoid outlook—although its use has been normalized; particularly in the case of less self-consciously literary written Scots).²

Moreover, while it would be dangerous to make too much of this, there are points where, lexically, the Scots proportion is significantly lower than on other occasions. Compare, for instance,

Some Washington again may head them,
Or some MONTGOMERY, fearless, lead them;
Till, God knows what may be effected,
When by such HEADS an' HEARTS directed:
Poor, dunghill sons of dirt an' mire,
May to PATRICIAN RIGHTS ASPIRE;
and
But smash them! crush them a' to spails!
An' rot the DYVORS i' the JAILS!
The young dogs, swinge them to the labour,
Let WARK an' HUNGER mak them sober!
The HIZZIES, if they're oughtlins fausont,
Let them in Drury lane be lesson'd!
An' if the wives, an' dirty brats,
Come thiggan at your doors an' yetts,
Flaffan wi' duds, an' grey wi' beese,
Frightan awa your deucks an' geese

The first—essentially Standard English—passage is concerned with North American politics and abstract concepts of liberty, while the latter is concerned with the genuine sufferings, albeit presented ironically, of 'real' people. The latter carries much more emotional baggage with it than the former; at some level, for Burns and his audience, the use of Scots is particularly appropriate. Again, this did

not bode well for the language being retained as a fully fledged language of literate and abstract expression.

4.7 The middle classes and language use in the eighteenth century

It is also necessary to consider the audience which encouraged this 'vernacular revival'. Burns had a large popular following (which grew in size and diversity in the years that followed, including a considerable following outside Scotland), but his initial fame was confined to a relatively small population of members of the urban (or urbanized) elite, many of whom, we can assume, had at least taken an interest in the Anglicization efforts so prevalent during the same period (for a discussion of Burns in his political and social milieu, see the papers in Carruthers 2009; McIlvanney 2002 presents an analysis of Burns' political views).

A fundamental disconnect exists between the literary/secondary use of a language variety and its status within a society as a whole, something not always recognized by cultural historians or literary critics (or, indeed, sometimes, linguists). Poetry does not butter bread. Nor does it necessarily represent the language use, language attitudes, or linguistic ideology present in a given place at a given time. It is also quite possible to love poetry written in a variety, while at the same time despising the spoken language and its speakers (McClure 1995b terms this the *Pinkerton Syndrome*, after an eighteenth-century observer from England who held such views; as we will see, this issue continues to surface regularly, including in the activist movement). The move away from Scots to Standard English as the primary spoken code for the upper echelons of society (and, inexorably, the urban 'middling sort') was well underway by the end of that century.

There is some evidence for distinctions in language use within these groups, however. In letters and other personal materials from Aberdeen produced in the middle of the eighteenth century, the

written Standard English of young men from a professional urban background tends to be just that. If there is Scots usage in their writing, it is likely to have been primarily used consciously for a variety of social reasons and purposes, perhaps. With their female peers, however, while most (if not all) are primarily intent on writing in the polite English of their day, their usage evinces considerably more Scots features at all levels. Education and expectation probably underlie this. Young middle-class women would have been expected to be literate, but not necessarily in a fully 'public' sense. Their roles in the society of the time would have been strikingly different from those of their male peers. Their written language was essentially employed for domestic purposes and did not have to possess the latter group's 'polish' (Cruickshank 2006).

Some survival of the elite employment of Scots continued into the late eighteenth century. Cruickshank (2011) demonstrates this ably in her discussion of the language use in the letters to the factor [estate manager] of Lord Fife, a native of Banff whose political career involved regular visits for lengthy periods to London. He maintained at least a patina of Scots usage (primarily lexical). That this was at least partly conscious can be seen in his use of these features only when dealing with certain topics in particular ways. In other words, his command of Standard English during this period was not 'impaired' by a 'lack' in input, as was the case with the language of the Aberdonian women already mentioned; Scots was, for him, in a sense, an 'add-on'. It is striking, for instance, that Lord Fife's employment of Scots features practically disappeared in the year when his marriage collapsed. The performance had stopped. Despite this very knowing use of the language, however, it does seem that he not only knew Scots but used it. This gentry use of Scots may not have survived far into the nineteenth century (although this statement of itself has to be broken down, in relation to individuals' backgrounds, experience, and, I suspect, identity associations). But the linguistic instability in written language in particular (with increasing knock-on effects into spoken forms) led to the creation of a new form of Standard English, termed *Scottish Standard English* by twentieth-century scholars.

4.8 Scottish Standard English

Standard English is a *multi-modal standard*: more than one version of the standard is evinced, depending on the place in which it is used. Thus the Standard English of the United States is different from that of England in a relatively constrained way in terms of orthography (and to an even lesser extent structure), while there is rather more lexical difference (which rarely leads to significant misunderstanding). Canadian and Australian Standard English are different again, although, except again in terms of lexis, this distinction is rather more muted (and contingent) than those felt between the two 'main' varieties. Irish Standard English exhibits somewhat different traits. While it would be possible to read a considerable amount of this variety and be unable to say where the person writing comes from, particular words, often derived from Irish, such as, to use a contemporary example, *Luas* 'speed', used to refer to the Dublin tram network, can (and do) immediately foreground their national origin. Doubtless this is the intention.

Scottish Standard English as a national variety of the global standard shares many similarities with these other forms in terms of divergence from the perceived norm. The level of material derived from local speech forms is considerably higher, however. I have discussed this in more depth in my 2016 book, but in the following I will present the primary argument, concentrating on the multiple sources which are likely to have fed into the variety.

This (complex) analysis is based upon a straightforward assumption. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, written Scots and written Standard English were both in use within Scotland, with the former making eventually conclusive inroads upon the linguistic domains in which the former was used. Naturally, Scots is dominant in spoken domains; a number of Scots—in particular those associated with trade into England and the Church (where at the very least Bible readings would have been in English)—are likely to have had some command of Standard English as a spoken medium; quite a few others would have been able to produce some Standard

English. I imagine that this would have been focussed on those features, in particular phonological, where the distinction between the varieties was especially transparent. Primarily this 'broken English' would have been used when attempting conversation with monolingual English speakers. It may also have been used to impress (or intimidate) people whom the speaker assumed were monolingual Scots speakers, a form of aggressive behaviour not confined to Scotland.

Even with the most 'accomplished' user of second language English in Scotland, however, both their written and particularly, perhaps, spoken English was heavily influenced by their Scots, spoken and written. There is evidence, for instance, that, at least into the nineteenth century, some ministers were pronouncing *delight* as /də'lɪxt/, based upon the alternation of *light* and *licht*, despite the fact that the <gh> in *delight* was intended as a spelling convention, following the diphthongization of /i/ in English as part of the Great Vowel Shift (see Chapter 5 below) and also the complete loss of /x/ in London English in the course of the fifteenth century. My mother pronounced *polite* as /pə'lɪxt/ when sending up the heavily Anglicized English of some Scots (although, given the lack of rhoticity in English which this pronunciation implies, this mock variant is likely to date from considerably later phonologically than was the case with *delicht*).

During the course of the seventeenth century, as we have seen, Written English would have conquered successive domains previously associated with Written Scots. We can assume that, by the first decades of the eighteenth century, a Scottish Written English existed, essentially identical with the Standard English of England, but exhibiting what, we can assume, were Scots features at all levels, carried over in an ad hoc manner from their native Scots, normally unconsciously. Those who had had more contact with monolingual native speakers of English would have evinced fewer of these 'mistakes' than would those that did not. Over time, increasingly 'correct' English usage would, through education, the Church, and other establishment domains, have spread through the usage of those with limited direct contact with monolingual English

users. In the mid eighteenth century, with that period's predilection in urban elite circles for the 'perfection' of their English, this direct Anglicization would have proceeded apace, in a more structured way, in spoken forms of Scottish Written English. This would have been the case even if most people would never have completed the transfer fully. These Scottish features in the new Standard English of Scotland would have been at best occasionally and often unconsciously used. This did not happen.

To understand this better, we need to return to what was happening with the use of Scots during the same period. The first point to recognize is that, throughout the seventeenth century, Spoken Scots remained the default norm and had considerable influence upon both Spoken and Written Scottish English. It ceased to have the authority which its speakers employed in writing, however. These domains became dominated by the imported variety; inevitably this meant that elements of Standard English percolated into spoken Scots. This preponderance of Scots speakers active in the formation of the Scottish variety of Standard English in the eighteenth century meant that the unconscious injection of Scots features was considerable. Other, more conscious, features, were also at play in the formation of what we can term a Spoken but specifically Scottish Standard English.

These features reflect the countervailing tendencies—simplifying somewhat, an ongoing move towards Anglicization alongside the rise in status of the vernacular (at least under certain circumstances)—in Scottish linguistic life in the eighteenth century. They also reflect the tension between the universalism (but also elitism, focused on the political, economic, and mainstream cultural capital of the 'centre') of the Enlightenment (so powerful in mid-century Scotland, of course; see, for instance, Broadie 2001) and the concentration on the 'genuine' and local (also perceived largely through an elitist lens, of course) focus of the incoming Romanticism (these are, of course, binary simplifications of what was essentially a continuum for many individuals). It is also likely that the level of effect which these tendencies had on the Scottish populace as a whole would have been patchy. Inevitably, tensions, whether creative or not, developed

in perceptions of the evolving language use in the country (this was also true for Gaelic, but in different ways).

Appreciation for the nature of Scottishness, both politically and culturally, was undoubtedly changing by the end of the eighteenth century. This has been described (in relation to the middle of the nineteenth century) as *unionist nationalism* (Morton 1999). This tendency was not concerned with political nationalism in the sense of independence for the country, but rather with stressing the unique and powerful contributions Scotland and Scottish people had made to Britain and its empire, replacing the previous unitary views of many influential Scots in the post-Union period (for whom Scotland was renamed *North Britain*). While it is dangerous to make too much of this, considerable anti-Scottish prejudice persisted in England.³ Perhaps as a result, many elite Scots began to emphasize (to an extent and sometimes in a rather 'manufactured' way) their Scottishness.

At the end of the eighteenth century it is unlikely that most of this elite group actually sounded as if they were their elite English contemporaries, something reinforced by the interpretation in Jones (1995) of the work of Sylvester Douglas, a Scottish orthoepist working during this period. The pronunciations he represents are actually quite 'broad', according to our modern sensibilities. But the variety elite Scots spoke as their primary code *was* essentially the Standard English of England in terms of lexis and morphosyntax, while phonologically it represented an interpretation of 'native' patterns according to a different distribution of sounds (as would also have been the case for language use in, for instance, what became the United States of America). But, given their linguistic environment and their new appreciation of national identity, Scots words and phrases are likely to have been found in their speech and writing. Aitken (1979) described this conscious use of Scots as representing *overt Scotticisms*. These are an ongoing presence in Scottish life, as can be seen by the perusal of 'quality' newspapers on any given day, in particular in less serious parts of these publications, such as the daily diary. If someone is described by the

diarist as *kenspeckle* 'well-known, noteworthy', it cannot be assumed that the diarist is necessarily a native Scots speaker (or even uses that word in their speech). Usage of this type is in a sense performative.

As we have seen, lower-middle-class, in particular urban, people of this period were also often uncomfortable about their speech. They were already writers only of Standard English and moving towards the prestige norms in their speech. They were also native speakers of Scots; Scots was, no matter what they might have wished, their dominant spoken code. Inevitably, unconscious leakage from their spoken Scots to their spoken English would have been considerable. Also inevitably, this cross-over would have affected their written use, although it is likely that the formality and permanence of this medium would have led to this happening rather less often. Aitken termed this type of language use *covert Scotticisms*.

With different ratios and different speaker populations, these conscious and unconscious convergences and crossovers represent the consolidation of both spoken and written Scottish Standard English. This was the variety which became the primary language of (mass) education in Scotland; it is the primary rival of spoken Scots.

Some upper class and, in particular, upper-middle-class speakers continued with a spoken variety significantly closer to the spoken Standard English of England than is the case with spoken Scottish Standard English, although, as can be seen by the language use of many of the products of at least the urban (largely day pupil) private schools of Scotland, including elite foundations like Fettes College in Edinburgh, most people maintain an accent closer to a Scottish than an (elite) English one. Confusingly, this form of Standard English is occasionally referred to as *Scottish Standard English* by some scholars (for instance, Schützler 2015). Naturally, the relationships portrayed in Figure [4.1](#) again represent a binary simplification of a continuum, which also often involves (lower) middle-class hypercorrection.

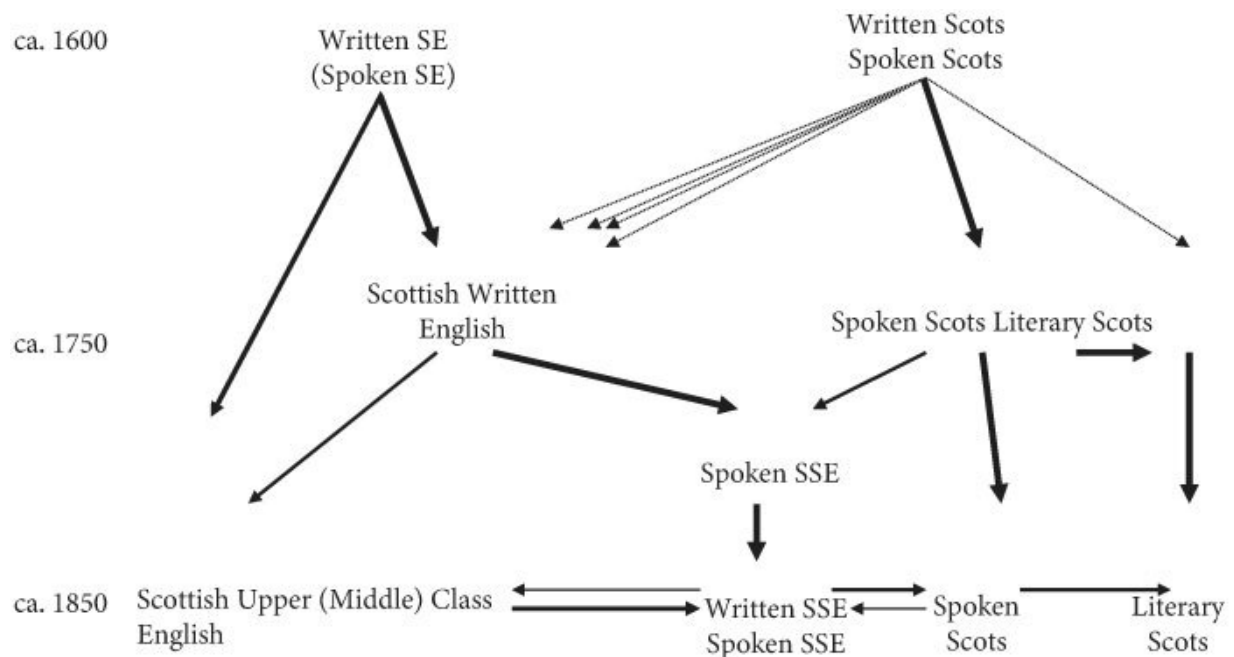


Figure 4.1 The development of Scottish Standard English
SE = (English) Standard English; *SSE* = Scottish Standard English
 The thinner the line, the less the influence felt. Broken lines demonstrate particularly weak influence.

4.8.1 Language attitudes and the rise of Scottish Standard English

The complex development of Scottish Standard English described here underlines the tension (indeed, sometimes conflict) felt from the eighteenth century on between the uses of spoken and written Scots. Partly this stems from the linguistic wedge that was driven (often by themselves) through the Scottish people during that period, with the upper classes, upper middle classes, and, increasingly, the aspirant urban lower middle classes abandoning the vernacular in favour of the imported Standard, albeit with, as we have seen, for at the least the last group, this transfer being more an ambition than an achieved goal. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, in materials which directly discuss language use, quite strikingly different views are expressed towards Scots. All lead

to a set of competing theses about the present and future state of the language.

A major example of this type of witness is represented by the returns to the original *Statistical Account of Scotland*, initiated and edited by Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster in Caithness. Despite their title (*statistical* had somewhat different connotations in the late eighteenth century in comparison to now), these accounts, provided wherever possible by the ministers of all the Church of Scotland parishes of the Kingdom, are largely prose descriptions of a parish, following the rubric of a questionnaire designed by Sinclair, one of whose categories was *Language*. The returns are of mixed quality (Sinclair's editorial touch was very light): some are barely perfunctory, while others are full to the point of prolixity. Not all correspondents answered the *Language* question. Most of those who chose not to answer this question were from, and ministered in, the Scots-speaking part of the country, which is, of itself, of considerable interest in relation to how Scots was perceived at the time in relation to English.

Nevertheless we can see that, in those who responded, many considered Scots to be part of a passing age, and not necessarily something which would be missed:

SA1 Lanark, Symington

As a specimen of the spirit and eloquence of those times [i.e., of the schisms of the 18th century], the following prayer, for the established minister of the place, is kept in remembrance, as uttered by one of the preachers on the green, after a discourse, in which he and his brethren were represented in the blackest colours:—"Thou knowest that the silly snivelling body is not worthy even to keep a door in thy house. Cut him down as a cumberer of the ground; tear him up, root and branch, and cast the wild rotten stump out of thy vineyard. Thresh him, Lord, and dinna spare! O Thresh him tightly, with the flail of thy wrath, and mak' a strae wisp o him to stap the mouth of hell!"

Associations with religious fanaticism paint the use of Scots into a past which most middle-class Scots wished to forget. This cannot be the whole story, however. Some informants make direct reference to the perceived uncultured nature of the local vernacular:

SA1 Aberdeen, Longside

The Buchan dialect has been long famous for the want of that neatness of articulation, and of that elegance of sound and accent, by which the southern and more cultivated nations have characterised their respective languages. In proportion as language becomes more refined, the uncouth guttural is either entirely excluded, or very much softened. ... In this corner we retain all the broadness of articulation, and, I am sorry to add, all the vulgarity of idiom, metaphor, and accent, which is to be met with in any part of the world. And it is probable that we shall retain these peculiarities of language longer than most places equally distant from the capital; because, except the resort of strangers to Peterhead, during the water-season, few visit us; and, of consequence, little of that intercourse is enjoyed, by which language is so materially affected. If the degree of mental cultivation in a country be commensurable by the state in which a language is found, (which is not a very uncommon rule) then we must not state our pretensions very high.

There is a counter-tendency, however, where Scots is considered to possess a degree of 'authenticity' in comparison with English, which could be seen as corrupt:

SA1 Perth, Bendochy

Language, - Is the common Scotch, which has not altered much in pronunciation and diction since Gavin Douglas's translation of the *Æneid* in that language. It is a provincial dialect of the English. Some words are of Greek original. ... *Cæsar de Bel. Gal.lib.* 6 §. 13,14 says, the Druids in Gaul spoke the Greek language, their schools being formed on the model of those in Britain. Some words are of French original; *blancheau*, (milk and water), is *blanche eau*, white water; *ma'gre*, (in spite of), is *malgre*; *ingle*, (the fire), may be traced in the Latin *ignis*. The celebrated author of the *Wealth of Nations* observes, that people who live in the country have more intelligence than those in towns. Farming does not require many words, but much reflection and observation, and great exertion and industry. People that live in retirement are not so expert in their use of words as they that live in society are; but their tongues are better indexes of their hearts. They do not need to live on little traffic, which is a great enemy to truth and morals; and one not always a match for those arts of trade, by which townspeople sometimes take them in (further discussion of language attitudes in the first *Statistical Account* can be found in Millar (2000) and Millar (2003)).

Some of these views are echoed in the early stages of the Scottish tradition of producing dictionaries which are backed up by a degree

of scholarship (for a discussion see Mcleod and McClure 2012; McClure 2012; Rennie 2012a, b; Williamson 2012).

4.9 A dialectalized language in an urbanized country

As a result of these interlocking sociolinguistic processes, Scots became a dialectalized language, like Occitan and Low German (Catalan almost followed this course, but has staged an impressive Renaissance). The production of high literary materials, with Scots employed at least in dialogue, was, strikingly, connected strongly with the past and with the decision-making processes of a small elite who, no matter their original position in life, were inclined to look from the outside upon an idealized or disparaged populace (the two views are not mutually exclusive).

From the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, the Scottish economy began to alter until, by the end of the nineteenth century, a country built on the output of small-scale, often subsistence, farming, had become an urbanized and industrialized society. In the countryside, 'improvement', the more practical side of 'enlightenment' (briefly touched upon in Section [4.3](#) above) involved, in lands which were already fertile, the termination of rental agreements for smallholdings and their replacement with larger farms, with, until mechanization intervened, a need for many agricultural workers. Marginal land, at least in theory, was developed through improved drainage and fertilization. In the Highlands, the process involved some importation of lowland methods where this was possible. Most often, a subsistence blend of arable and livestock-based farming was replaced by a pastoral economy, largely based on sheep. Fishing, which had previously been one of the ways in which people on the coasts maintained themselves, became instead a commercial concern, with a skilled workforce being involved only in that occupation. Existing harbours were developed

and new ones founded. The last of these involved considerable movement of people to and along the coasts.

The changes in agriculture encouraged the movement of large numbers of people who had been 'squeezed out' in one way or another. Many migrated to North America or, later, the British colonies in the Southern Hemisphere (particularly, perhaps, New Zealand). Many moved into the industrializing areas of the Scottish Central Belt, possibly because their labour was needed as industry and commerce developed exponentially (for further discussion, see Aitchison and Cassell 2003; Devine 2018).

Central Scotland sat, as shown in Chapter [1](#), on immense mineral reserves; in particular, iron and coal. The harnessing of steam technology in the last years of the eighteenth century led both to a great increase in the need for these substances and to a means by which innovations in terms of what could be done with the substances and the scale of manufacture could be brought into being. The urban areas sucked in what became a new proletariat fleeing poverty and misappropriation. These came from the Lowlands and the Highlands, but also from Ireland, where similar changes were taking place on an island which had little of the mineral wealth of its sister country. Many of these inputs would help change the developmental trajectory of the Scots dialects of West Central Scotland in particular (although the extent of this influence can be debated). Before discussing this further, however, it is necessary to consider the reaction of middle-class opinion makers as these changes passed through.

The *New Statistical Account of Scotland* (1841), followed the template which Sir John Sinclair had established late in the previous century. The attitudes expressed towards Scots found in this undertaking had shifted significantly from what had been said previously. Instead of seeing Scots as a product of an earlier age, whose passing was generally seen as a good thing, the second *Account* often also looks back to an earlier age, with a degree at least of regret, often using Scots. This is particularly the case in the following excerpt, where hard-line Presbyterian views are recounted

with admiration, but only if they are purveyed by one of the lower orders:

SA2, East Lothian, North Berwick

A few years ago, an incident occurred on the Bass [Rock, a rocky island, offshore from North Berwick; covenanting Presbyterians were imprisoned within the island in the 'Killing Time' of the 1680s], expressive of a strong lingering desire to retain the chapel, occasionally at least, for its original destination. A young lady, in the presence of her father, was here solemnly confirmed in her Romish faith and profession, and the due ritual services were gone through in the presence also of the keeper of the Bass and his boat assistant. On the conclusion of the solemnities, the priest turned to the keeper, and asked him, with due decorum, if he would not now also kneel down before the altar, and follow them in similar dedication and worship. 'Me?' said the Protestant Presbyterian James, 'Me? Na, na, am thankfu' there's mair sense gi'en me, -- I wad just as soon, Sir, fa' doon and worship one o' thae puir solan geese about us,' (pointing to the myriads around him) 'than e'er gang on wi' ony sic mockery.' My friend and parishioner James remains an invincible adherent of the Reformation, and also, as well may be conjectured, the Bass being ever before him, a stern abhorrent of prelatric tyranny and regal despotism,

Generally the Scots used here is treated in an affectionate way. As I have noted elsewhere, however (Millar 2004a), the *worthies* who are regularly portrayed in anecdote are *pawkie* 'witty and cunning' and *coothie* 'naturally knowledgeable' purveyors of native wit, which might puncture pomposity but is primarily respectful towards established authority and represents inherently conservative rural values.

To our tastes, some of Burns' writing can appear sentimental, even mawkish, as demonstrated in 'The Cottar's Saturday Night', with its simple country virtues extolled, so popular in the nineteenth century (and so little read now). This may not have been intended by Burns, of course: he may have intended to express *sentiment*, a prevalent Romantic theme, something which was already growing in importance during that period, but which we now identify as (sometimes mawkishly) *sentimental*. Burns' successors, with a few noteworthy exceptions, perpetuated this sentimental portrayal of rural life; the middle-class commentary discussed above may

represent attitudes both influenced by these associations and intended to create and promote them. The urbanizing reality of the country was mostly ignored; when that was not the case, it was generally either denigrated or seen through the prism of the worthy, productive, deserving, and socially conservative poor. This inevitably had knock-on effects both in terms of views about the vernacular and in its use in the creative sphere.

An immediate result of this was the *kailyard*: a movement (at least as perceived by later commentators) which stressed rural virtues, sentimentalized for its largely middle class (and inevitably largely urban) audience, readily using (rural) Scots associated with the rural poor's virtues. Kailyard writing reached its highest point some time in the last decades of the nineteenth century. While it is normal nowadays to mock the *kailyard's* sentimentality (often with very good reason), at its best, as with *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* by Ian McLaren (the Rev. John Watson) of 1896, the writing is, in my view, as affecting as anything written at the time. Its associations, however, were very dangerous in relation to how Scots was perceived, both by its speakers and those who consumed literature of this type.

Nevertheless, it is from this tradition that most later examples of written Scots are derived, from poetry, through dialogue in novels, through commentary in newspapers (particularly strong in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but continuing in some diaries in daily newspapers) to occasional verse in local newspapers. It is also represented in arguably the most read examples of written Scots: *The Broons* and *Oor Wullie*, cartoon strips in the *Sunday Post*, presented weekly since the 1940s. These are set in a timeless urban setting but, no matter their attractiveness, they are essentially kailyard in nature, although without the religiosity with which the original genre was associated. When I was a boy, I loved these cartoons; they did not represent the setting in which I spoke Scots, however.⁴

4.10 Urban Scots

Urban dialects are different from rural ones. They probably always have been, globally. Cities and towns, at least until the nineteenth century, were far less healthy places to live than was true for their hinterland, largely because of the greater chance of catching a range of different types of diseases in a built-up area. In order to survive and prosper, urban areas had to encourage immigration. Immigrants came for a variety of reasons, despite the danger. As we have seen, some came because they had no choice. Their previous occupations (indeed, ways of life) often had ceased to exist. Others came in search of fortune or out of curiosity (the three were not mutually exclusive, of course). The immigrants normally did not come from one place or region (unless the push factor was particularly strong there). Instead they came from a range of places, often nearby, but sometimes much further afield. The creation of new linguistic accommodation varieties, of *koinés*, was inevitable.

Glasgow in the modern era is the most obvious place to start any discussion of the development of urban vernaculars. Even before the harnessing of steam technology, the city was a place of importance. It had ties with a range of places external to Scotland: the northern counties of Ireland, but also with the North American colonies; in particular those which took part in the cultivation and processing of tobacco. Connections with the southern colonies, in particular in relation to the production of cotton, along with the West Indies for sugar, were present from the eighteenth century on, but expanded considerably through the development of the steam engine and the deepening of the Clyde (from 1818 on), so that larger ships could sail all the way up to the City Centre. Moreover, the invention of the cotton gin dropped the price of cotton, bringing its products to the masses.⁵ Its exploitation gradually eclipsed tobacco as the major import. This means, sadly, that Glasgow's modern prosperity was at least to a degree founded on the products of slavery. But the wealth that turned a major port (perhaps like Bristol or Liverpool) into a city

of nearly a million inhabitants by the end of the nineteenth century was based on the local products of the industrial revolution.

Where did the immigrants into Glasgow come from? What varieties did they speak? The general impression from non-linguists and general laypeople is that Irish and Highland inputs were dominant. If we consider the population figures, however, this is not the case (although this does not mean that these inputs are not considerable and important. I, for instance, had one great-grandfather who was born in Ireland, while two of my great-grandparents were born in the Gàidhealtachd). We can find some features within urban West Central Scots which may be due to influence from Irish English (taken in its broadest sense) and also Gaelic (possibly with reinforcement from Irish). Most of the dialects described demonstrate, however, that, as the population numbers suggest, a mixture of the already existing Glasgow dialect and those spoken by immigrants from neighbouring counties.

What does mark off these varieties from their inputs is that they appear always to have been less rich in specifically Scots lexis than their country cousins, something which appears to have become increasingly the case in the course of the twentieth century. From an early period, moreover, the presence and use of colloquial English was considerable in a way that it was not in rural districts, possibly because of the close ties Glasgow had with North America in terms of trade. It may be also that the presence of immigrant speakers of Gaelic and Irish English (as well as Irish), most of whom would have had some knowledge of Standard English and closely related varieties before their arrival in Glasgow, encouraged a degree of accommodation on the part of the 'locals'.

From a very early period, middle-class opinion-formers have treated the urban dialects—in particular, the Glasgow dialect—as if they were aberrations, slovenly varieties spoken by a feckless proletariat, often contrasted negatively with the 'pure' Scots of an independent and loyal peasantry, a point which we have already discussed. I suspect that underlying this disdain is a fear of the political strength working people struggled for throughout the period. It is likely that, particularly in Glasgow, many of these

attitudes run in line with (and possibly obscure) anti-Irish and anti-Catholic prejudice (since the city has a far larger proportion of citizens of Catholic heritage than is the case elsewhere in Scotland; see Paterson 2000). A hundred years and more of official intolerance of Urban Scots has meant that people across Scotland and beyond have a negative reaction to urban speech. This view is also present in urban areas, however. Indeed, native speakers often share these views overtly, while also holding positive covert views: many young people, in particular, consider Glaswegian usage to be 'gallus' and therefore attractive.

4.11 Scotland: Language in the twentieth century

The twentieth century represents a similar trajectory for Scots as was the case in the nineteenth century.⁶ An increasing number of lower-middle-class Scots moved away from Scots entirely (at least consciously), turning towards Scottish Standard English in practically all contexts external to the home (with the exception of highly marked and performative domains, such as the annual celebrations of Burns' birth ('Burns' nicht') on 25 January). Since many had ambitions for their children to 'get on', Scots was likely not to have been used as much in the home either. This alteration was probably most marked in urban contexts, primarily because of the negative views which developed towards urban dialects. In small rural towns and villages, in my experience, local people who were figures of authority, such as the solicitor or bank manager, might at least at times speak the local dialect; the Church of Scotland minister (or equivalent in communities where various types of dissent were prominent) might well also have been a native speaker; the social distance between minister and congregation often meant that this side of his (in more recent years also her) linguistic repertoire was rarely realized.

Even if the urban middle classes did maintain their dialect, its use was almost fetishistic at times, facing back towards the overt use of the language from the eighteenth century on. As Macaulay (1991) demonstrates, a number of middle-class residents in Ayr (in south-west Scotland) in the late twentieth century showed that they had native speaker command of Scots, but seemed only to be able to do this when impersonating someone else.

In rural areas, this disassociation was for a considerable period less damaging than was the case in the larger urban areas, where discriminatory views towards local dialects in comparison with both the standard variety and the 'pure' rural dialects was combined with the local variety being associated only with working-class speech. But even in rural areas, the passing of traditional occupations over the course of the twentieth century led to the very real danger that Scots would not so much be a living entity as a heritage item.

4.11.1 Lessening of speaker numbers

It is difficult to tell exactly how many speakers Scots had at stages throughout the twentieth century. Since the first-time knowledge and use of Scots was asked about officially was the Census of 2011, discussed above, we can only build up an impression, based on comments which may be based on prejudice (of various sorts) or wishful thinking, along with the effects of ideology. These reports suggest that, in rural communities, the local dialects continued to be passed on, at least until work patterns changed in the post-war period. Commentary often portrayed Scots as 'dying', although it might be necessary to accept this view as opinion based upon changes within the dialects, not liked by opinion formers in the communities, rather than the presence of genuinely moribund varieties. There can be little doubt, however, that major sociolinguistic forces were affecting both traditional and urban varieties of Scots by the end of the twentieth century; as we will

see, these changes are truly threatening to our understanding of Scots as a language.

4.11.2 Literary use

But even as the speaker numbers for the language declined, Scots developed towards being a major vehicle for literature, both in narrative and dialogue, eventually in prose, although originally primarily in verse. Beginning in the aftermath of the Great War, a grouping of writers, centred around Hugh MacDiarmid (the pen name, in some ways alter ego, of C.M. Grieve (1892–1978)), began to lay out a path for the use of Scots in ways which focussed on its employment in contexts associated with literary Modernism in other languages, imbued with a commitment, at least among the most visible of its practitioners, to a new interpretation of Scottish Nationalism. The term *Scottish Renaissance* was often used for this new experimentation and confidence (and was connected to similar work in Gaelic and, indeed, English). The name itself referred not only to the rebirth perceived to be ongoing in Scottish letters; it also looked back to the 'apogee' of writing in Scots. MacDiarmid explicitly rejected Burns and embraced Dunbar, although his work at its best embraced the lyrical folk tradition which Burns also tapped into. Indeed, MacDiarmid at times seemed to focus on Burns and his work as in some ways comparable to himself and his own, as a reading of his *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926) demonstrates. MacDiarmid also had an obsession with Christ and his suffering, despite his frequent avowals of atheism.

A central feature of MacDiarmid's work, including his scholarship, before the mid 1930s at least, was a belief that Scots could only truly become a national language if it achieved something like a standardized form. This would be created from the 'best' of the dialects, often filtered through the use of dictionaries (at the time, the most accurate of which being that of Jamieson of 1808) and a broad understanding of the work of the Makars of the fifteenth and

sixteenth centuries. This project, if it can be termed such, involved the rejection of consciously *dialect* poetry, most explicitly the works of Charles Murray (1864–1941), written entirely in North-East Scots, which MacDiarmid appears to have associated with conservatism and the Kailyard. His new Scots was often termed *synthetic Scots*, because it involved the bringing together of a range of different traditions and words displaying different dialect origins. It was, perhaps, an unfortunate term since, due to the development of plastics in the twentieth century, it could be analysed as representing unnatural and inorganic language (although a number of MacDiarmid's followers, most notably Sidney Goodsir Smith (1915–1975), played with the second group of associations in their work).

This set of experiments, which has continued to the present, is both impressive and something of a dead end. Students of the Renaissance, such as McClure (2000), make a strong case for their work representing the beginning of a movement towards standardization for Scots. This seems unlikely, however. Modernist poetry in Scots has, realistically, not had the influence upon Scots speakers that Burns and his followers had. While many people in Scotland had heard of MacDiarmid (at least during his lifetime: at the age of twelve I can remember his death being widely discussed), I suspect that far fewer would have heard of the more experimental of his followers. His contemporary, William Soutar (1898–1946), was well known. But he was an exception: his poetry tapped more readily into the folk tradition than some others' did.

What the Renaissance started and which did influence other writers and critics was a sense that the use of Scots in literary contexts need not be confined to an increasingly hackneyed set of topics, often depicting an idealized description of past (rural) Scottish life, a view perpetuated by the periodical *Lallans* (in its present form, 1973–). With the development of university provision for the teaching of modern Scottish Literature as *Scottish* Literature from the post-war period on, coupled with higher education coming within the reach of students of limited means, the trends towards a wider subject matter were matched by writers who employed their

everyday dialects—rural and urban—in their poetry (in this sense harnessing MacDiarmid’s ideas while refusing to accept fully—or at all, in fact—his views on dialect use).

This response towards MacDiarmid’s views was particularly marked with urban writers, such as Tom Leonard (1944–2018), whose ‘phonetic’ representation of urban demotic was matched by a desire to move away from a sentimentalized urban kailyard towards a poetry which could harness their dialects to describe experience beyond the everyday, while being grounded in the everyday. At their best, as with poets of the calibre of Sheena Blackhall (1947–), traditional dialects could create and make the same connections.

One of the knock-on effects of this progressive re-vernacularization in writing was the increasing employment of Scots in narrative prose. There *was* a tradition of writing short stories in Scots from the Renaissance on. But this was hampered by the cost of producing work which might not sell well enough to recoup printing and distribution prices. Occasional funding from government or quangos, increasingly generous from 1999 onwards, coupled with publishing becoming increasingly affordable because of new technologies, meant that prose work of a range of types was now available. The publishing venture Itchy Co, directed by Matthew Fitt (1968–), was particularly focussed on developing Scots literacy among younger people, but movements towards publication both of original materials, including, in the last two decades, several novels and translations, have been brought to fruition by a range of initiatives. Inevitably, these have gradually transferred to the web; many are available free to download. Many of these translations, such as those into a range of dialects of *The Gruffalo*, written originally by Julia Donaldson, have reached many households in Scotland and beyond.

4.11.3 Language activism

Scots language activism grew (and grows) from similar post First World War roots as those which were associated with the changes in literary focus and use detailed above. The outcomes have proved to be different, particularly as the primary aim for the writing of Scots has changed since the 1940s. Within the movement, however, there are associations which lead in strikingly different directions. In previous work (Millar 2005; see also 2018) I have suggested that two tendencies existed in relation to the development of Scots (with the double caveat that these tendencies are not absolute states—a continuum runs between—and that the ideological relationships and tensions within the movement are not as two dimensional as this analysis suggests²): an *official* party and a *cultural* party.

The official party look to an official Civil Servant Scots (implying standardization) which is then broadcast from the centre into all parts of Scotland, with particular focus being given to education. The cultural party tend to see the official party as putting the cart before the horse: it is through the support and encouragement of the constantly evolving vernacular tradition that Scots will become ubiquitous in Scottish life again. When I originally formulated this analysis I defined myself as a moderate official. I have since come round to the idea that the only way forward for the language is through its encouragement in education (in particular in relation to a child's early years). Without this focus, I believe that there cannot be a successful movement of change in favour of the language's spread (rather than 'preservation'). In the end, the language should be able to survive and spread, not because of its close relationship to vernacular culture (although of itself this is an important thing to emphasize) but because it is useful in people's everyday lives and should be seen, in an ongoing diarchy with Scottish Standard English, as something which encourages, rather than discourages, success. This task can only be achieved by direct action, not film productions or award ceremonies (although some of these public events may aid in status raising); it does need official support, however.

Education in Scotland (for discussion, see Anderson 1997) has and has always had an ambivalent relationship with Scots. Since the Protestant Reformation, vernacular education has always been focussed on the 'perfection' of English. Evidence suggests (Williamson 1982a,b) that teaching in Scots was commonplace in urban districts until the beginning of the twentieth century. In urban areas, however, local dialect was often brutally put down. Since 1999 this strategy has changed considerably; genuine attempts to teach Scots at school and university levels are, if not widespread, at least available. Many excellent resources are available, including Corbett and Kay (2009). The underlying views of at least some teachers, Imamura (2004) suggests, have not changed, however. Most of the initiatives developed in recent years have been based on the dedication of individual members of staff.

There is also academic interest in the Scots language. In Scotland itself, there are scholars working on Scots in the universities of Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh, as well as the University of the Highlands and Islands. Considerably more scholars work in Scottish literature, guaranteeing that some commentary on language will be presented to students. Many of these specialisms are passed on to students. Institutions for the analysis of Scottish culture associated with academic rigour can be found in the School of Scottish Studies (Edinburgh) and the Elphinstone Institute in Aberdeen. With the partial exception of this last organization, which is particularly strong on community outreach, most academics are focussed on analysis rather than active encouragement of language use (this is with the exception of some scholars at the University of Glasgow in the very recent past and in the present, discussed below). The Elphinstone Institute also offers credit bearing courses which teach (or invigorate) individuals' use of 'The Doric'. It must be recognized, however, that there is much which could be done for Scots in a planned way.

A (perceived) lack of concentrated effort by those committed to the Scots language, accompanied by a focus on the creative use of Scots, as represented by, for instance, the Scots Language Society or the Association for Scottish Literary Studies, rather than encouraging

its employment as an everyday medium of communication not only in speech but also writing, led, in the early 1990s, to the development of new Scots language activist networks. These were led by people in their teens and twenties, media- and IT-savvy and strongly committed to corpus, status, and acquisition planning for the language. Voluntary classes designed to teach Scots were developed, along with increasing pressure to develop a standard orthography.

By the beginning of this century, this wave was largely spent, with disappointments, such as the lack of consensus on producing a workable orthography, in particular, slowing down, if not halting, activism. This was not one of the happiest periods for the activist movement, given that the disappointments encouraged already extant friction between individuals and groups, leading to a degree of dissolution. The official support which Scots had gained by the beginning of the 2010s can to a considerable degree be attributed to this generation of activists, however.⁸ Its culmination in the publication by the Scottish Government of a policy document on Scots in 2015 was welcome to many, but left more unsaid than said. New momentum in the activist movement in the late 2010s, to some degree encouraged by the political foment through which the country has passed since the 2016 referendum on EU membership, led in 2019 to the setting up, under the aegis of academics at the University of Glasgow, of *Oor Vyce* 'our voice'. This organization aims to be a means by which activists and other stakeholders can interact in a coordinated manner in lobbying for more provision for Scots, in particular a Scots Language Act as a corollary to the Gaelic Language Act of 2005, or, as has been discussed in late summer 2022, a Languages Act which will give protection to both national vernaculars (according to their often contrastive needs).

This century of activism has been one in which Scots, as an independent entity, has come under increasing stress from which, it must be accepted, it might not recover, at least in its traditional forms.

4.12 Downfall?

At least since the Romantic 'revolution' (as evinced in the returns to both the old and new *Statistical Accounts*), it has been something of a commonplace to lament the passing of 'pure' dialects in the face of the languages of the metropolis; in more recent times this has been (and continues to be) attributed to globalization, but the process, it is argued, was present long before the term existed. Commentators have been bemoaning the death of Scots since the eighteenth century. To misquote Mark Twain, reports of its death have been somewhat exaggerated. What we think of as *Scots* might be changing, however. In some senses the end may, in fact, be nigh.

Looking dispassionately at Scots in comparison to English, where do the sociolinguistic and linguistic differences between the two varieties lie? As we will see, there are structural differences, but these are in general relatively minor. The phonological differences are considerable. But, from the point of view of the native speaker, it is lexical use which is central to our understanding of difference. There are, as is regularly pointed out by laypeople, many words which are essentially untranslatable into Standard English (or at least the Standard English of those who do not live in Scots-speaking areas) and are therefore those which incomers learn readily, such as *dreich*, which is (roughly) 'dreary, drab, endlessly repeated, dull, grey'. While these overt Scotticisms are likely to survive (indeed, thrive) as markers of an identity which is unlikely to disappear, a number of scholarly initiatives since the Second World War have demonstrated that a considerable amount of distinctive Scots vocabulary is ceasing to be used.

Partly this is inevitable. As society changes, there is less need for lexis concerned with a particular field, if that field is no longer connected to people's everyday lives. A brief example: I come from central Renfrewshire. If the *Linguistic Atlas of Scotland* is consulted, the local (on this occasion very localized) equivalent to 'soot' is *coom*. If I were asked for the local word for this substance, I would, probably after a bit of thought, give that word. But if you asked

young people from the same district to provide a Scots equivalent for the product, I would be very surprised if they could do so. I was born in the mid-1960s and can remember a world where practically every house had a working chimney (a *lum*, as I would term it), burning coal. By the time I was at school, the Clean Air Acts had encouraged people to move away from the use of this substance. If you do not burn coal (or other substances, like wood or peat), you do not have soot.

This is even more marked with traditional industries, such as farming. As Fenton (1987) demonstrates, considerable local vocabulary was associated with the traditional patterns of work on farms across the country. As farming has become increasingly competitive and mechanization has become the norm, most of these words have ceased to have much currency. The processes with which they were associated are no longer current (you do not, for instance, need to remember words and phrases associated with working with horses when tractors have been used, and solely used, on your farm for at least five decades). What is troubling, however, is that native vocabulary is rarely used to describe and populate the new reality.

This tendency towards marginalization and loss is particularly marked in urban areas, perhaps. Inevitably, the move into the cities of speakers of rural dialects, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has meant that a great deal of original lexis has been jettisoned as being of little use, without equivalent local vocabulary filling these gaps. As Macafee (1994) demonstrated in her study of knowledge and use of Scots words and phrases in working-class areas of Glasgow, however, traditional Scots vocabulary *not* associated with a passed way of life, such as *hippens* 'baby's nappy', were hardly, if ever, used by people born in the 1960s (in their teens and early twenties when she conducted her survey in the mid to late 1980s); many did not know the words at all. It was only really those people who were born between the wars or earlier who had something like the 'full set'. Strikingly (although also depressingly), many of the younger speakers did not distinguish

between these Scots features and ephemeral slang.⁹ Often the vocabulary used was essentially colloquial English with local pronunciations.¹⁰

These changes are not confined to urban Scotland, however. In work carried out by me, Will Barras, and Lisa Bonnici (represented in Millar, Barras and Bonnici 2014) at the beginning of the 2010s in representative fishing communities on the east coast of Scotland, many findings similar to those of Macafee were produced. These were particularly striking because traditionally the fishing communities were highly distinctive and discrete places, often different even from their nearest landward neighbours. The decline of the fishing industry and the development of dormitory town status for some settlements have opened up the communities to processes found in other parts of the country, as we will discuss further the results of these changes in Chapter 7.¹¹

4.12.1 A 'between language': Homogenization within colloquial English?

What might be the results of these processes of homogenization and globalization? Before turning to Scotland, we should consider the process elsewhere. The southernmost province of the Netherlands is Limburg: the generally narrow strip bounded by Belgium and Germany. The local dialect, Limburgs, is not a particularly close relative of Dutch, the prestige standard of government and education. Mutual intelligibility between idealized monolingual speakers of Dutch and Limburgs would be at best patchy. On the other hand, the dialects of southern Limburg, focussed around the city of Maastricht, are very similar indeed to the dialects spoken across the border in the German city of Aachen and its hinterland. The boundary between Dutch and German there is inherently political rather than truly linguistic, at least historically (Hinskens

1996; for similar situations in Italy, see Ferrari-Bridgers 2010 and Repetti 2014).

What do Limburgs-speaking people do when speaking to other Dutch speakers? Given that all people in Limburg will have been educated in Dutch as the national language, it would be expected that this is the variety which they would use when speaking to people from elsewhere in the Netherlands. This does indeed happen, with a Limburgs-accented pronunciation and, whether consciously or not, some local lexical features. In other words, it is something like Scottish Standard English, but perhaps rather closer to the non-standard than is the case for Scotland. In everyday speech within the province, however, you are more likely to hear a variety which is neither Dutch nor Limburgs, comprehensible to speakers of both varieties, incorporating features of both, while maintaining its connection to Limburg. Dutch scholars refer to this variety as a *tissentaal*, a 'between language'. It should be noted that this is not an ad hoc form of speech, reinvented for every conversation. It exists as a variable but nonetheless coherent variety. The important point for our discussion, however, is that there are many younger people in Limburg who now use the *tissentaal* as if it were the local dialect (since, to them, it is; see also Watt 2002).

I would not want to say that Scots is dying in Scotland. The responses to the question on the use of Scots in the 2011 census demonstrate this is not the case. The language in its traditional form is in good health in parts of the North-East, Caithness, and the Northern Isles, as well as in areas in Ayrshire, Galloway, and elsewhere, although there may well be differences in transfer between age groups and social backgrounds. In urban areas, and increasingly in rural, *tissentaaals*, regional *koinés*, appear to be developing, *tissentaaals*. Their lexis is to a considerable extent made up of colloquial English, but with much overlay of lexical features from the earlier dialects of that region; some of this material will be used consciously (overt 'regionalisms'). The phonological system will remain more local, essentially the same as for the local form of Scots. I cannot envisage a time, for example, where people from the North-East of Scotland would not want to sound 'North-East'.

Scottish Standard English /m/ would remain /f/ in the vernacular, for instance. Local identity is tied up with local language use. What the ancestry of these varieties will be is more complex than at any time in the past, however.

4.13 Scots in Ulster

There have been considerable comings and goings between Scotland and Ulster for millennia.¹² At the closest points, such as between the Mull of Kintyre and the shore of Co. Antrim, Scotland and Ireland are readily visible to each other on clear days. The currents which run through the North Channel, however, are such that, although much narrower than the neck of the English Channel between Dover and Calais, a relatively small number of people have swum across. The fact that, in the seventeenth century, Ulster Scots-speaking Presbyterians sometimes rowed across from Co. Antrim to Campbelltown in Kintyre to attend divine service which suited their consciences (rather than the Episcopalian norms of the state Church in Ireland) becomes almost heroic in this context. The fact that they came to Ireland at all reflects part of long-standing English policy in relation to its Irish 'colony'.

From the twelfth century on, there was an infiltration of English speakers into Ireland, taking part in, and profiting from, the apparently endless violence found in the country. From an early period, the Kings of England became involved in the lucrative takeover of power. The English 'triumph' was, however, always partial. Beyond a few urban centres, most of which had ongoing and considerable trade connections to the 'mainland', however, many Old English settlers, planted in land which was surrounded by native Irish speakers, became at the very least bilingual, assuming certain cultural traits associated with the 'savage' Irish. The geography of the island, moreover, did not lend itself to full control by the colonists. This was particularly the case with the low-lying centre, containing the River Shannon and its tributaries, still heavily forested

and the home of various 'fevers', some of which may have been related to malaria. Gaelic resistance was endemic in these areas and beyond. English armies could, and did, 'disappear' (or at least return in depleted disorder) in campaigns in the west. Leaders of these expeditions were often courtiers who were out of favour.

Of the four provinces of Ireland, Ulster was the least Anglicized, with the exception of a few English military settlements, such as Carrickfergus on Belfast Lough. The local aristocracy and gentry paid lip service to loyalty to the English crown, but generally pleased themselves. They were regularly in at least conversation with agents of France and Spain. This situation became increasingly acute as England embraced Protestantism while the majority of Irish people, whether Old English or Gaelic, remained Catholic. Any action against Ireland could therefore be perceived and announced as bringing the 'true religion' to the 'wilfully benighted'.

Essentially, the plantation system across Ireland developed by Mary and Elizabeth Tudor involved the 'planting' of English people in particularly Gaelic regions, largely through land expropriation. Those native Irish who remained were supposed to become 'civilized' by osmosis and example. The system was introduced late in Ulster (during the reign of James I of Ireland; James VI of Scotland), largely because of organized resistance to the process. When the leaders of this resistance were forced into exile, plantation was thorough-going and often brutal.

Scots speakers came to Ulster during this period, crossing over from the West Central dialect area in particular, although a considerable number of people from the South-West also migrated. Most of these migrants were not planted officially, as was the case in other parts of Ulster, where speakers of English, coming from the north midlands of England, were settled. Instead the Scots were largely either planted by Scottish landowners who had already moved across or entered Ireland 'on spec', picking up expropriated land when it was available. Although Scottish settlers are reported across the nine counties of the province, and their linguistic influence can be felt in the large-scale presence of the Scottish Vowel Length Rule in Ulster (and in more central parts of Ireland, in

fact: for a discussion, see Maguire 2021), it was in parts of Counties Down, Antrim, Derry (Londonderry), and Donegal that a sufficient mass of settlers came to affect the language use in the area (to the extent that local Irish speakers learned Scots as their second, eventually first, language).

Ulster Scots speakers were generally religious dissenters in Ireland, following radical Protestant traditions at odds both with the established Church of Ireland and the (often covert) Catholicism of the majority. Although most speakers of the dialect today are Unionists politically, this connection to the established order was significantly less pervasive in the first two centuries of their sojourn in Ireland. It would be somewhat glib to say that they were persecuted for their faith, but at times their lives were not made easy. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many speakers migrated to North America, many being particularly strongly associated with the patriot cause during the American Revolution. At home, common cause was often established between them and local Catholics; the last time when this was achieved in any numbers was during the various risings of the late eighteenth century. Other members of the community, however, no doubt frightened by the revolutionary nature of the risings, were pushed towards particularly strong loyalty to the established order, including the setting up of vigilante groups designed to put down rebellion. Modern Irish Nationalism became an essentially Catholic affair (although there were Nationalist Protestants, some of whom were Ulster Scots speakers). The identification of a strong connection with Britain (as the 'mainland') was also framed in terms of identification with Scotland, with much interchange taking place between Ulster and West Central Scotland in particular.

In Northern Ireland, the rump Protestant-dominant part of Ulster, Ulster Scots speakers were generally part of the ruling class (or at least encouraged to feel so). Their language and culture was generally marginalized, however (this was also the case in Donegal; many Irish people, including some in that county, have only a limited idea that such a minority exists), although speakers produced literature, in particular poetry, of considerable value. As part of the

Belfast Accords of 1998, however, Ulster Scots, while not being promised the same status within the six counties as Irish, was seen as a counterweight. In the years following the dialect has achieved considerable status as a crypto-official variety (although this has sometimes distanced the written representation from the speakers). At the same time, however, the dialects themselves appear to be becoming essentially moribund. As in Scotland, local varieties are in danger of becoming locally flavoured varieties of colloquial English. Elements within the Unionist parties are moving towards taking a more *cultural* than linguistic view of the nature of being Ulster Scots, something which, given the connotations of *culture* in that part of Ireland, appears to be positioning Ulster Scots speakers within a solidly Protestant Unionist context. This is almost, but not entirely, accurate. This change in policy also signals the acceptance of linguistic defeat.

4.14 Conclusion

An analysis proposing a 'fall' of Scots, particularly in Scotland, since its sixteenth-century apogee, needs to be qualified in a variety of ways, not least because the use of the language has in many ways carried on in such a healthy way, albeit without reinforcement from the everyday use of the language in writing. This rather rosy view has to be weighed against another reality: a considerable part (indeed, possibly the majority) of residents of Scotland do not speak the language (although most can readily follow it). More importantly, Scottish Standard English is the default written variety for all Scots speakers. This authoritative role cannot but affect spoken language use.

A highly concerted and disciplined language activist planning and policy campaign might be able to give Scots a place at the 'top table' of languages in Scotland (and, quite possibly, in Ulster; in particular in relation to a truly official status for the language). Whether this would arrest the supposed decline in speaker numbers is another

matter. The ongoing homogenization with colloquial forms of English discussed above, found in particular with urban varieties, may well result in what is left of Scots being grafted onto another plant of the same species.

In the next three chapters we will consider change in Scots from a primarily linguistic point of view, although many of these sociolinguistic points made in this chapter and the preceding will inform what is said.

5

Historical phonology of Scots

5.1 Introduction: How possible is it to produce a coherent historical phonology for Scots?

Presenting a discussion of long-term phonological change in any language is problematical. Before the end of the nineteenth century, only written evidence is available to the scholar. Contemporary discussion of the sound system of the language—such as exists—can be of dubious quality (although there are also examples, such as the Icelandic First Grammarian, where the discussion is both insightful and of particular scholarly depth). In most cultures, moreover, a tradition of rigorous analysis of pronunciation, system, and norms, based upon agreed linguistic principles, is only available from the beginning of the nineteenth century at the earliest. Even with the most brilliant treatments of sound patterns which precede this, much debate is possible over what a particular scholar meant by their comparison of pronunciation with that of other languages, or what is meant by a particular description of, for instance, a place of articulation.

This is even more the case with languages like Scots, where the orthographic tradition is not, and was not, straightforward. Middle Scots had something approaching a set of conventional spellings, but there was still great potential for variation within the system,

some of which is meaningful in relation to our understanding of the phonology of that time, while other orthographical evidence is not (for a discussion of this, see Bann and Corbett 2015). French and English orthographic models (themselves not set in stone at the time) were influential in a sometimes haphazard and generally personal way. This system, such as it was, was subverted to a high degree by the impact, during the seventeenth century, of the English spelling system. There is limited ordered connection between the two systems of usage as the crossover took place. The connection between symbol and sound, while not negligible, is also not straightforward, when we consider the limited (in some ways dialectally skewed) information that we have.

Nevertheless, although the usual caveats pertain, decades of scholarly engagement have meant that we can make informed statements about the evidence available to scholars, not wholly, but largely, through the work of A.J. Aitken and Paul Johnston.^{[1](#)}

5.2 Problems of interpretation; resources to aid comprehension

This chapter is intended to provide an analysis in some depth of the history of Scots phonology. Unlike many other histories of this type, it will begin the discussion as far as possible before the first records of the language, using evidence from the Northumbrian varieties of Old English and their (reconstructed) antecedents. This is in line with other historical analyses of other languages found in this series. Scots was not a head-birth of the twelfth century; it has the same historical depth as all other Indo-European varieties. These are all complex matters; some provoke considerable scholarly debate. Before this, however, it is necessary to discuss a number of tools and central points of interpretation by which our analysis can be deepened and rendered more straightforward to follow. One of these (Section [5.3.2](#)) is concerned with the Great Vowel Shift. This may appear somewhat ahistorical, since it occurs before discussion of

much earlier changes. After much thought it was positioned in this context to make a large part of the discussion which follows (in particular that involving all of the Early Scots long vowels and a number of its diphthongs) coherent in terms of watching systematic change evolving. Otherwise the products of the shift run the risk of being interpreted as several apparently independent changes.

5.2.1 Problems with comparing Scots and English historical phonology

The phonological structures of Scots and Standard English are in many ways cut from the same phonological cloth. Scots and English have developed in far more similar ways than is the case with, for instance, English and German: the divergence between English and Scots is more recent and less absolute.

Nevertheless, this divergence is a central source for the limited comprehensibility which exists between the two varieties. Many (indeed most) of these differences are also found when comparing prestige southern English varieties with forms of Scottish Standard English. What seems genuinely 'English' to a Scot may not be fully comprehensible to many people from outside Scotland (and the northern parts of Ireland). The most striking of these divergencies, as we will see, have developed over the last 600 years. The greatest of these is the general change in associations in vowel length—the Scottish Vowel Length Rule—which came into being from the seventeenth century onwards in Scottish, some northern English and many Irish varieties, altering the nature of the Germanic vowel system. The bedrock to the phonological divide between the two languages lies much further back in their histories, however. Although other indicators of this divergence demand considerable attention, the most marked are the unprecedented frontings of OE /ɑ/ and /o/ in Scots (and its upper Northern English relatives), which appear to have developed by at least the fourteenth century.

Essentially, and not unexpectedly, the geographical, and therefore linguistic, 500 kilometres distance lie between the sources for what became the metropolitan Scots of the fifteenth century (and, by extension, the Modern Scots dialects) and the Standard English which developed from London English. In historical terms, the split between the two sets of descendants of Old English came into being not long after the ancestor of that language was brought to the Island of Britain. Both sources were Anglian (in distinction to Saxon or Kentish) in phonological nature, but as far from each other within that larger grouping as was geographically possible while remaining under the same linguistic umbrella. As we saw in Chapters [2](#) and [3](#), it is possible that some of these distinctions may even have preceded the arrival of speakers of what became English on the Island of Britain. A more tangible source for divergence lies in both the presence of considerable numbers of Scandinavian speakers for several centuries in northern parts of England and the 'mixed' nature of Scots (as discussed in Chapters [3](#) and [8](#)). Both Bernician and Deiran features were represented within the koine which had already developed before the first written Scots appeared in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

A further complication is that the modern diversity of the Scots dialects is considerable (although they are also obviously formed from, at the very least, very similar ancestors). Many of these features are likely to go back a considerable distance into the history (perhaps even pre-history) of the language. The dominance in the Middle Scots period of the written court norms has meant that the early histories of the various dialects are difficult to make out, in particular in phonological terms. Despite these issues, however, an attempt will be made, wherever possible, to map the historical development of dialect features.

5.2.2 Lexical sets

In seminal work published in 1982, Wells analysed differences and similarities between all the varieties of English according to a set of vowels associated with the pronunciation of particular words. The great advantage of this 'word set' approach was (and is) that it is not necessary to illustrate comparison by direct phonemic or phonetic reference; instead, a series of lexical sets, which hold together in most varieties, is associated with particular sounds in particular varieties. No one variety of English has *all* of the sets associated with a separate pronunciation. Generally there are mergers of sets (although of different kinds) in all the varieties, but one or more varieties will have a particular word set as a unit separate from the pronunciation of other sets. Thus Received Pronunciation² (RP) and many other varieties make a distinction between the lexical sets FOOT and GOOSE, the former being a short vowel /ʊ/, somewhat lower and more central than /u:/). The latter is historically a long vowel /u:/, until recently placed in the back of the mouth in the highest possible position but now somewhat fronted in many varieties. No Scottish variety makes a distinction between the two sets (although, as we will see, the former sound is likely to have been present in earlier forms of Scots).

In Table [5.1 a](#) sense is given of the ways in which Wells represented Scottish pronunciation in an, of necessity, rather brief description (since his seminal three volume work attempts to describe *all* varieties of English, there is only so much space which can be dedicated to one variety). His lexical sets will be realized alongside the sets which will be used for Scots usage in this chapter and elsewhere. While his analysis is, of course, generally accurate and representative, it evidences one striking problem with Wells' system. Wells (1982: II, 405–6) recognizes a phonetic split for Scots in his PRICE set based on vowel length, but claims that the distinction is purely allophonic in Scottish Standard English (SSE). For most speakers (apart from some people from the Northern Isles and, perhaps, some members of the upper middle classes who attended 'elite' schools in Edinburgh: Schützler 2015), minimal pairs can be constructed between (with Scots) *ay* 'yes' /æ/ and *aye*

'always' /əi/ and between (with Scottish Standard English as much as Scots) *tied* and *tide*, the latter having a shorter and more centralized initial element than the former. This is due to the Scottish Vowel Length Rule, to which I will return shortly).³

Table 5.1 Contrastive lexical sets

Wells (1982)	SSE (Johnston-Millar)	Scots (Johnston-Millar)
<i>No equivalent</i>	<i>No equivalent</i>	BUIT
FLEECE	MEET/BEAT	MEET
BEAT		
FACE	MATE/BAIT	MATE-HAME
BAIT		
DRESS	DRESS	DRESS
TRAP/BATH/PALM/START	TRAP	TRAP
KIT	KIT	KIT
STRUT	STRUT	STRUT
FOOT/GOOSE/CURE	BOOT	OOT
GOAT	GOAT	COAL
THOUGHT/NORTH	CAUGHT/COT	CAUGHT
LOT/CLOTH	COT	
PRICE	BITE	BITE
TRY	TRY	
MOUTH	OUT	OWER
CHOICE	CHOICE	CHOICE/LOIN

Because of this issue with Wells' model, along with a range of other issues, I have developed Paul Johnston's classification of 1997 (this analysis based, in a critical but respectful way, upon Wells' system; see Millar 2007 and 2018) to provide lexical sets appropriate for contemporary (and, as will see, earlier varieties of) Scots.⁴ Many of these are the same as those suggested by Wells, although sometimes with different names because the distribution of words found in each set is often strikingly different from that in Standard

English. On occasion, such as with BEAT, the distinction with MEET is necessary because in some varieties of Scots members of the two sets are not pronounced the same (unlike in varieties of Standard English). The same is true for MATE-HAME and BAIT. MATE-HAME is equivalent to Wells' FACE, but the distribution of words contained within it is markedly out of line with that of Standard English, primarily because, as we have already mentioned briefly and will analyse in greater depth below, the development of Old English /ɑ:/ was strikingly different in the north of England and Scotland from what happened in the midlands and south of the former.

There is, however, one lexical set which has no equivalence to any Standard English set: BUIT (as I have termed it). This set differs considerably in pronunciation across the Scots-speaking world, but is derived from one set: the fronting of Middle English (and Old Norse and sometimes Old French) /o/ to the rounded front vowel /y/ (varying, we think, with /ø/) in the north of England and Scotland; this vowel was then unrounded in most, but not all, Scots dialects, according to patterns discussed below (so that, for instance, in my native dialect, the equivalent to English *moon*, Middle Scots /myn/ or /møn/, is /min/).

Table [5.1](#) provides three lists of word classes proposed for Scottish Standard English, one by Wells (1982). These demonstrate the issues over the front diphthongs mentioned above in relation to his analysis. The other, to the left represents the classes proposed by me (informed to a considerable extent by Johnston 1997a,b) for Scots employed for Scottish Standard English as well.

5.2.2.1 Competing systems?: Aitken vs Johnston-Millar

Two relatively recent resources are the primary means of beginning an analysis of Older Scots pronunciation: Aitken (2002) and Johnston (1997a,b). Both works are of considerable importance to our understanding of sound change across the Older Scots period. They are works which demonstrate high levels of scholarship,

demonstrated through analysis and synthesis. Both works have some issues in the way that they lay out evidence and how what evidence there is (particularly in the pre-Scots and Early Scots periods) is interpreted. The number-based systems employed in Aitken (2002) to delineate Scots vowels from first records until the present is sometimes opaque (in particular when employed alongside a 'philological' graphic description of vowels rather than a phonological one⁵). Only limited consideration of the dialectal diversity present in the past is given. On the other hand, Johnston (1997a) could be criticized for reconstructing the past and its diversity from the present evidence, as Caroline Macafee, Aitken's literary executor, points out (Aitken 2002: xxx–xxxi). She also observes that Johnston's work suffered from being written in considerable haste, through no fault of the author. Put simply, Aitken considers everything according to set changes; Johnston tends to see everything as ongoing patternings. Aitken's analysis is undoubtedly the more straightforward in terms of its relationship to the learning and application of a complex system. Johnston's lexical set approach, on the other hand, is particularly well suited to a discussion of the dialectal variation present in contemporary Scots. The analysis is also particularly useful in expressing the potential and inevitable variation and change which must have existed in Older Scots beneath a relatively uniform written veneer. What we have to recognize throughout, however, is that there is a period of at least seventy-five years in the seventeenth century, which is noticeable in morphosyntax as well, where evidence for pronunciation of any dialect of Scots is minimal at best. Even in the rather better evidenced Middle Scots period, it is not a straightforward matter to translate orthographic practice into evidence for pronunciation. The FITS project at the University of Edinburgh has made considerable progress in relation to this matter, however; similar commentary could be made about the corpora and analysis underlying Bann and Corbett (2015). Something like a *lacuna* still exists, however.

5.3 Historical changes best described as unitary processes

In this section we will consider processes and changes that took place over a considerable period and will help explain the discussion in Section [5.4](#) more fully.

5.3.1 The Scottish Vowel Length Rule

Later in this chapter we will be considering the diversity of vowel pronunciations across Scotland, both in contemporary and historical terms. Before this is carried out, however, a particular issue must be addressed: vowel length in the dialects of Scots (and, indeed, Scottish Standard English). Historically, descendants of Old English distinguished between long and short vowels, so that, in Old English, the vowel in *hūs* 'house' and the first vowel in *butan* 'except' were distinguished only by length (even if the vowel in the latter was already [ʊ], rather than [u], the difference is not truly salient). This type of distinction is still maintained with these sets in some modern northern England and Irish English varieties. But, due to developments in Scots in the seventeenth and (early) eighteenth century, however, vowel length ceased being a distinguishing factor in most Scottish pronunciations (the change seems to have begun in the Central dialects; it is least established in the Insular Scots dialects; see Millar 2018: 59–60). Thus *Beith* (a town in northern Ayrshire) and *Beath* (a district in Fife) were both originally pronounced with a long vowel. But the former now has a significantly longer vowel than the latter, due to the voiced consonant following the vowel in *Beith*. Surprisingly, however, unless trained, practically no native speaker of Scots or Scottish Standard English recognizes the distinction. These distinctions are due to the *Scottish Vowel Length Rule*, a phenomenon also known as *Aitken's Law*, after the scholar who first formulated it (Aitken 1981). In Scots and Scottish Standard English, essentially, a vowel is now long not

because of historical length but because it is followed by a voiced fricative, /r/ or is morpheme final. This can be heard in the distinction in vowel between *wreathe* and *wreath*, *tear* (noun) and *feeble* and *Tay* and *tame*, the first in each example having a markedly longer vowel.

Several eminent scholars (for instance McMahon 1991 and 2002 and Carr 1992) have claimed that the Scottish Vowel Length Rule only works on stressed vowels pronounced towards the upper part of the mouth. I hear it in my own speech with /a/ in minimal pairs like *Maas* /maz/ (admittedly a rather contrived example: 'a collection of mothers') and *mass* /mas/, however.

The sole occasion in which native speakers normally hear a distinction in situations developed within vowel length rule contexts is between the diphthongs in BITE and TRY, discussed above and in greater depth below (although which words are associated with which sets depends on the dialect involved). What should be borne in mind is that there was once a time in Scots where vowel length followed the historical patterns. This is no longer the case. An explanation for why such a wide-ranging change should have taken place has never been attempted in a satisfactory manner, except that it appears to be a far more thorough-going equivalent to the shortening of the vowel in *good* (/gʊd/) and similar words in most varieties of English, in comparison to *moon* (/mun/).

5.3.2 Great Vowel Shift(s)

Another feature which will be mentioned on a number of occasions in this discussion is the *Great Vowel Shift*, a succession of movements in terms of the pronunciation of particular vowel sets, which affected the long vowels and some of the diphthongs of all varieties of English and Scots. It has analogues in the pronunciations of the various dialects of German and Dutch, but not in the North Germanic languages.

Essentially this set of changes follows a pattern whereby vowels originally pronounced lower in the mouth rise one 'stage', while the vowels which originally occupied these positions also rose a stage. The vowel in the highest position in the mouth can rise no further and therefore diphthongizes. This last change may encourage diphthongs, already present lower in the mouth, to monophthongize, filling the position of what had been the 'slot' of the lowest vowel, before it rose (this description is unhappily anthropomorphic; it is difficult to see how else it can be recounted in a straightforward manner, however). Labov (1994) discusses and exemplifies these processes as cross-linguistic patterns in some depth (although his schematization of the processes involved may be too ordered truly to aid analysis of the complexity of some of the issues involved). What caused these changes and their Germanic analogues to be set in motion in essentially the same period towards the end of the late Middle Ages is inherently unanswerable, but might have something to do with the urbanization and internationalization of markets in the period: people were on the move and linguistic usage was becoming mixed in centres of trade. Compromise varieties (*koinés*) coming into being. This explanation does not work as well for Scots, however, given that Scotland, at least beyond Edinburgh and a few other places in the central parts of the country, was rather backward economically in comparison with England and western and central parts of the European continent at the time.

These changes affect all of the historically long vowels in Scots (as well as two of the diphthongs present in the language in the late Middle Ages). In the main sections of this chapter, analysis of change will take place at heart in relation to the modern word sets; this has many advantages but lessens the reader's understanding of systemic change. This section will provide a scaffolding for this type of understanding.

It should be noted before we begin that a primary feature which marks off the Scots Great Vowel Shift from that of Southumbrian English at least is that what is described here as the BUIT vowel (see below), the descendant of Old English and Old Norse /o/ and, to an extent, Old French /o/ found in Scots was not affected by the

set of changes. It is quite possible that, at the time, it remained a rounded vowel. Its later unrounding in most varieties caused mergers with high front vowels which had already been affected by the shifts involved or, in the case of merger with KIT, were not affected because they were associated with historically short vowels. This BUIT exception had knock-on effects for the nature of the OOT vowel, the descendant of Old English and Old Norse /u/, in the late medieval and early modern periods.

In the first instance we will consider the changes involved in relation to the English of London and its environs, since change in this variety is best covered in the scholarly literature (and the result of the changes there created the present vowel system of Standard English, including Scottish Standard English). This will be related throughout this chapter to changes during the same period in Scots. Since we cannot be entirely certain of the pronunciation of particular stages of the development (although some of the commentators on pronunciation during the period are obviously talented 'natural' phonologists and phoneticians), I normally refer to the sets involved according to their spelling: thus <ee> against <ea>, <aCe>, and <ai/ay>. Under most circumstances, we can assume that different spellings represent different pronunciations (at least at some points in the language's development). In the interests of clarity in relation to the structure of this chapter (as well as to aid comprehension) I will also use, where appropriate, the Scots and Scottish Standard English lexical sets mentioned above. It should be noted that the phonological reconstructions are based on highly informed and scholarly guesswork, going back well over a century (for discussions, see Millar 2012b). What is said here is as straightforward an approximation for actual usage and change as we are able to achieve.

Before the Great Vowel Shift (ca. 1375)

Before the Great Vowel Shift, London English had four long front vowels and three long back ones, as well as two diphthongs.

In the front of the mouth,

<iCe> words, such as *ride* (BITE/TRY), were pronounced /i/;

<ee> words, such as *been* (MEET), were pronounced /e/;

<ea> words, such as *bean*, *break* and *well* (adverb) (BEAT), were pronounced /ɛ/;

<aCe> words, such as *made* (MATE; this is a much larger class in Scots than in English because of the presence of the HAME set), were pronounced /a/. In English this group had only recently come into being, caused by lengthening of the originally short vowel and the subsequent loss of -e (see Smith 2004). In Scots, however, HAME is likely to have been present in the front of the mouth before the originally short vowel MATE set occupied the same slot.

In the back of the mouth,

<ou> words, such as *house* (OOT), were pronounced /u/; because of the lack of raising in the <oo> words, this vowel was not affected by the Great Vowel Shift in Scots;

<oo> words, such as *tool*, were pronounced /o/; the raising which affected this vowel did not take place in Scots or Northern English dialects, because the descendants of Old English, Old Norse, and, to some extent, Old French words originally with /o/ had already been fronted to /ø:~ y/; this is the BUIT vowel;

<oa> and **<oCe> words**, such as *road* and *rode* (COAL; this is a much smaller group in Scots than in Standard English, or indeed any variety spoken south of the Humber-Lune line), were pronounced /ɔ/.

With the diphthongs:

<ai/ay> words, such as *maid* (BAIT), were pronounced /ai/;

<ow> words, such as *bowl* (OWER), were pronounced /au/.

Great Vowel Shift 1 (ca. 1425–1500)

After the first stage of the Great Vowel Shift, London English had three long front vowels and two long back ones, as well as four diphthongs.⁶

In the front of the mouth,

<ee> words, such as *been* (MEET), were pronounced /i/; they had been raised;

<ea> words, such as *bean*, *break*, and *well* (adverb) (BEAT), were pronounced /ɛ/ (or possibly /e/);

<aCe> words, such as *made* (MATE), were pronounced /a/. There may have been merger with HAME at this point in Scots (therefore the vowel is likely to have been at /ɛ/ by this point); certainly, this eventually happened.

In the back of the mouth,

<oo> words, such as *tool*, were pronounced /u/; they had been raised (as noted above, the fronting of the BUIT vowel meant that this class no longer existed in this position in Scots) OOT was maintained at /u/;

<oa> and <oCe> words, such as *road* and *rode* (CAUGHT), were pronounced /ɔ/.

With the diphthongs:

<iCe> words, such as *ride* (BITE/TRY), were pronounced /əi/; they had been diphthongized;

<ou> words, such as *house*, were pronounced /əu/; they had been diphthongized (because of the fronting of the BUIT vowel, this shift does not take place in Scots: OOT remains a monophthong);

<ai/ay> words, such as *maid* (BAIT), were pronounced /ai/;

<ow> words, such as *bowl* (OWER), were pronounced /au/.

The development of these diphthongs was sometimes markedly different in Scots from what happened in English. We will discuss this further below.

Great Vowel Shift 2a (1500–1600), although competition between the two sub-systems discussed here was only resolved by the end of the seventeenth century in the London area.

In the front of the mouth,

<ee> words, such as *been* (MEET), were pronounced /i/;

<ea> words, such as *bean*, *break* and *well* (adverb) (BEAT), were pronounced /e/; they had merged and risen with the **<aCe> words** (MATE), such as *made* and the **<ai/ay> words** (BAIT), such as *maid*, which monophthongized.

In the back of the mouth this merger was only partial in some varieties of Scots, with BAIT remaining separate in some circumstances (indeed, this was the case with a limited set of words in all dialects of Scots).

<oo> words, such as *tool*, were pronounced /u/ (as already mentioned, this change could not have taken place in Scots); in Scots, OOT was retained at this position;

<oa> and <oCe> words, such as *road* and *rode* (COAL), were pronounced /o/; they had been raised. They merged with the **<ow> words**, such as *bowl*, which had monophthongized (this last change, associated with OWER, did not take place universally in Scots).

The diphthongs:

<iCe> words, such as *ride* (BITE/TRY), were pronounced /ai/; they had been lowered (the Scottish Vowel Length Rule, not long after these changes, caused the originally single set to split into discrete long and short diphthongs);

<ou> words, such as *house*, were pronounced /au/; they had been lowered (this change did not take place in Scots).

Following the second (initially prestigious) stage of the Great Vowel Shift, London English had two long front vowels and two long back ones (another had come into being, which does not affect the situation here), as well as two diphthongs.

Great Vowel Shift 2b (contemporary with Great Vowel Shift 2a)

In the front of the mouth,

<ee> words, such as *been* (MEET), were pronounced /i:/; **<ea>** words, such as *bean*, *break* and *well* (adverb) (BEAT) were also pronounced /i:/ and merged with the **<ee>** words;

<aCe> words, such as *made* (MATE) and the monophthongized **<ai/ay>** words, such as *maid* (BAIT), merged at /e/. As we will see, this merger was only partial in some varieties of Scots, with BAIT remaining separate in some circumstances (indeed, this was the case with a limited set of words in all dialects of Scots).

In the back of the mouth,

<oo> words, such as *tool*, were pronounced /u:/ (as already mentioned, this change did not take place in Scots) HOOSE was maintained in this position;

<oa> and **<oCe>** words, such as *road* and *rode* (COAL), were pronounced /o:/; they had been raised. They merged with the **<ow>** words, such as *bowl*, which had monophthongized (this last change, associated with OWER, did not take place universally in Scots).

With the diphthongs:

<iCe> words, such as *ride* (BITE/TRY), were pronounced /ai/; they had been lowered (the Scottish Vowel Length Rule, not long after these changes, caused the originally single set to split into discrete long and short diphthongs);

<ou> words, such as *house*, were pronounced /au/; they had been lowered (this change did not take place in Scots).

After the (initially less prestigious) Great Vowel Shift 2a stage, London English had two long front vowels and two long back ones

(another had come into being, which does not affect the situation here), as well as two diphthongs.

There was some variation in the pronunciation of the long vowels in the period, with short variants often apparently being present, regularly, we think, in variation within sets and perhaps even between individuals. Because short vowels did not take part in the shift, this led to readily discernible distinctions in pronunciation. These variations can be seen most markedly with the <ea> words, where /ɛ/ pronunciations are the norm in varieties of Standard English with words like *bread*, *dead* and *death*, but, in Scots, descendants of the long vowels which went through the Great Vowel Shift have often prevailed;⁷ the originally long pronunciations appear also to have been found in southern English varieties in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at least.

Scots has generally been more consistent in its treatment of BEAT. With the same set there are still some apparent remnants, for whatever reason, of Stage 2a pronunciations, such as *break*, *steak*, and *great*. As we will see, in some Scots varieties, many or all examples of BEAT are realized as /e/. This is also the case for many Irish varieties of English and Scots. These apparent retentions could be analysed as conservative patterns which have not been affected by the changes initiated and accepted in the 'centre' in the seventeenth century. To an extent this is probably correct, although the possibility that the impetus for the substitution of the /e()/ BEAT set by the /i()/ had run its course before it had the opportunity of reaching regions on the 'periphery' must certainly be countenanced.

5.4 Scots vowels: An historical description

Using the analysis of large-scale historical processes discussed in Section 5.3, this section will discuss how the vowels and consonants of Scots changed (or, indeed, did not change) from the Old English period until the present day.

5.4.1 How far back should we trace the history of Scots phonology as an independent entity?

Traditionally, an analysis of the historical development of Scottish vowels has confined itself to the analysis of the information presented by Scottish documents from the twelfth century on, with astute use of both later Old English (from the Northumbrian—particularly North Northumbrian—dialects and, in particular, Northern English documents predating or contemporary to the same period Scots materials began to be written. To a degree this makes sense, since the history of Scots is embedded (in academic terms, not necessarily in linguistic reality) within the study of the history of the English language, where evidence of phonological change in periods earlier than the first attestations of Scots has been analysed and discussed in some depth. Nevertheless, there is a danger that overwhelmingly concentrating on the post-literacy evidence of Scots obscures our considerable knowledge of prior states, as well as making Scots appear ancillary (something that would not now be done when comparing, for instance, the development of Dutch in relation to that of German). With this in mind, we will briefly consider the prehistory of the phonological system of Scots.

It would be possible to trace the Scots vowel system to Indo-European. I will not attempt to do so here, however, since the level of reconstruction necessary to reproduce any system of that proto-language and compare them with later systems inevitably means that there is a possibility of elements being lost in the analysis. It would also be possible to begin with proto-Germanic. This is also a reconstruction, of course, but one which is considerably closer to historical attestation (although even on these occasions there is a time gap of at least 500 years). The level of change which would have to be discussed before even Anglo-Frisian, never mind Old English, could be described as a phonological entity would be prohibitive in terms of space and, more importantly, would not really help to elucidate later change in Scots.

5.4.2 Changes in the vowel system of Old English

Changes in vowel phonology in the pre-Old English and Old English periods are well covered at a variety of levels in the scholarly literature. Much of this will not be discussed in depth here because of the extent of this coverage. In the following, however, a number of central points about these changes will be made since they contribute to our understanding of later changes in Scots. Particularly importantly, it must be noted, however, that (late) West Saxon so dominates the corpus of extant Old English that our understanding of the phonologies of other dialects is regularly tentative. This observation is not helped by the reality that most extant 'dialectal' texts appear heavily influenced by the 'standard'.

5.4.2.1 The Old English sound system: Germanic background and dialectal diversity

In the immediate pre-literate period of what became Old English, and to some extent in the period immediately following full literate expression in Roman script, the phonological system of Old English went through a succession of changes which rendered it distinctive in relation to its close West Germanic relatives (with the partial exception of Frisian).

There is a tendency throughout the Germanic languages for the original /ei/ (merged with /ai/) to monophthongize. Indeed, the original diphthongal forms are now at their most prevalent in southern dialects of German (this limited distribution now partly obscured by the spread of diphthongal pronunciations as part of the diffusion of Standard High German, which preserves these features), western dialects of Norwegian and the Atlantic varieties of North Germanic. The outcome of the monophthongization was different in what became English than elsewhere, however. In most Germanic languages the outcome was a mid close vowel along the lines of /e/. In Old English, however, the equivalent coalesced as a low back

vowel, whether unrounded /ɑ/ or, possibly less likely, rounded (/ɒ/), the latter supported by later evidence from the region south of the Humber–Lune line, but rather less so by evidence from north of that line.

The Germanic diphthong /au/ was also monophthongized in several varieties, whether entirely, as with Dutch, Swedish, and Danish, or only in certain contexts, as with German (Dutch *roodt*, German *rot* ‘red’ but Dutch *boom*, German *Baum* ‘tree’). This was, perhaps unexpectedly, not the mainstream development in Old English, where a diphthong with a fronted first element and lowered second—/æɑ/—was retained (at least for a time). In several dialects—most notably, but not exclusively, West Saxon—this ‘original’ form was joined by newly diphthongized sets from a range of sources; these new forms could be either long or short (see Hogg 2011 [1988b]: 82–3) for a discussion of several occasions where Northumbrian does not exhibit this diphthongization to the same extent).

These extensions of diphthongization are not confined to this vowel, however. Germanic had a diphthong /eu/; in most varieties of Old English these forms were maintained (as they were in several other Germanic languages). Further diphthongizations led to this class becoming rather larger, with, again, short and long members of the <eo> class becoming apparent. In most dialects, new diphthongs formed from original /i()/ eventually joined this class (early spellings suggest that /i()o/ was kept separate). This was not at least fully the case in Northumbrian, however, where <io> and <iu> spellings are common even in later Northern texts, such as the English gloss to the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (Hogg 2011 [1988b]: 101). A counter-tendency towards monophthongization was also present for a variety of reasons, not least in Anglian varieties, however.

We can make too much of the distinctive development of Old English in comparison to the other Germanic languages. Both the West and North Germanic languages (but not their East Germanic equivalents) went through a process of *i*-mutation, often termed *Umlaut*. When a syllable following the stressed syllable contained /i/ or /j/, and the stressed syllable had (generally) a back vowel, this

vowel was fronted, primarily because speakers' brains were already processing the fronted nature of the following vowel as they pronounced the preceding vowel. Thus /a()/ > /ɛ()/, /o()/ > /ø()/, and /u()/ to /y/ in these contexts. When the second syllable was lost (or was neutralized), these originally phonetic changes became phonemic. Thus Old English *mann* 'man' was distinguished from *menn* (the plural), while *mūs* 'mouse' was pluralized as *mȳs*. While Modern Scots primarily retains Umlaut to mark plurality only (with the exception of fossilized usages like *eldest* and *elder* (compare *auldest* and *aulder*)), other Germanic languages have retained the feature in several parts of their lexical systems. On other occasions, such as the vowel in *green*, the mutated nature of the vowel is now entirely opaque except to a specialist.

Although Umlaut is common to a range of Germanic languages, the change itself appears to have developed a considerable period after the various dialects became discrete languages. It is likely that the change was inherent and incipient in all these languages, but, for whatever reason(s), only became categorical and meaningful in a later period. This could be analysed as a form of Sapir's *drift*, the idea that similar changes can take place in related systems, although not necessarily at the same time. In his original discussion, Sapir only discusses *drift* in one language (Sapir 1921: 155); this has since been regularly extended by scholars to the comparison of the same system in more than one closely related language; see Malkiel 1981.

What can be said about both English and Scots is that, while Umlaut has been a constant presence in their histories, the rounded nature of the fronted vowels produced, /y()/ and /ø()/, rarely survived. Orthographic evidence suggests that, while /y()/ survived in all dialects except Kentish to the end of the Old English period (and appears to have survived for a considerable period longer in the dialects of the English south-west and south-west midlands), the lower vowel quickly became unrounded to /e()/ in all dialects. Regular written attestation is only found in the early Old Northumbrian dialects. This general tendency towards unrounding is found in other Germanic varieties, but is much more systemic in the ancestor of English and Scots. Strikingly, similar patterns of

unrounding can be found in later varieties of Scots and the dialects of northern England, when /y: ~ ø/ was formed by the fronting of earlier /o/.

A number of phonological features are essentially confined to (Northern) Old Northumbrian. In some of the later Northumbrian texts, for instance, there is a tendency for /e/ following /w/ to become rounded, probably to /ø/. Thus earlier Anglian *weg* 'way' is often represented as <woeg>. This change is thoroughgoing in the gloss to the *Durham Ritual*, but is also regularly found in the gloss to the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (Hogg 2011 [1988b]: 199–200). Interestingly, no trace of this change survives into the earliest recorded Scots.

It can be said, therefore, that Old (North) Northumbrian was somewhat different in terms of vowel phonology from more southerly forms of English. These differences should not be overstressed, however.

5.4.2.2 Pre-Scots phonology and its Old English ancestry

There is something of a disconnect between what we know about the phonology of Old (Northern) Northumbrian and what can be reconstructed for the pre-Scots of the twelfth century. Many of the vowel pronunciations indicated by late Northumbrian evidence are not represented in later evidence from Scotland. Northumbrian texts from the late Old English period provide evidence, as far as we can tell, of two rounded front vowels and several long and short diphthongs. With a few minor exceptions, these pronunciations and the phonemic distinctions which underlie them have disappeared entirely in the first evidence of early Northern Middle English in Scotland,⁸ dated from the twelfth century on. The same is true of the Middle English texts from the Upper North of England during the same period. These disconnects are undoubtedly due to the relatively lengthy period in which the local varieties were not

recorded. We cannot 'see' the changes taking place and must therefore reconstruct rather than observe what is truly happening (unlike in the southern Middle English equivalents of the time). That something other than change which can be completely explained as system-internal might have been at work during the period will be touched upon on a variety of occasions in the following narrative.

5.5 The development of the Scots vowel system: Word sets

The following will attempt a discussion of Scots historical phonology, combining material from both the Aitken and Johnston-Millar analytical models, as well as information and insights from other sources. The basic framework of Johnston-Millar is used, since, in my view, it provides a more transparent means of portraying modern and past dialectal diversity. A number of caveats have to be admitted within the analysis, however.

5.5.1 Modern Scots front vowels

5.5.1.1 BUIT (Aitken vowel 7)

For whatever reason, at some point in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries, /o/ was fronted and initially remained rounded in the Germanic dialects of northern England and Scotland. This vowel was derived from a range of sources. These include Old English and Old Norse /o/, as with pre-Scots *gōd* 'good'; Old French /o(ɔ)/ before a labial, as with Anglo-Norman *pore* 'poor'; and early pre-Scots /ʊ/ lengthening to /o/, as with OE *duru* 'door' > /dorə/ (Aitken 2002: 39). The majority pronunciation, the FITS corpus informs us, is likely to have been /ø/, although later and contemporary evidence suggests that a higher pronunciation, possibly at /y/, was also present in some places. The first outcome

implies fronting only: a high-mid /ø/ outcome appears to be supported by the vowel height of the modern reflexes of a large part of the modern Scots-speaking areas, where pronunciations like /e/ and /ɪ/ are the norm in these positions. The /y/ pronunciations found in the Northern Isles (and in pockets across the Scottish mainland), along with the /i/ reflexes found in the Northern dialects, suggest the higher pronunciation. Differences in Middle Scots spelling between <oCe> or <oi> and <uCe> or <ui> favours the former over the latter in terms of numbers. Nevertheless, variation in height is found across the country.

In the Northern Isles, /y/ is presently the norm with the BUIT vowel (although this is not always distinguishable from the OOT vowel, if that is fronted): 'moon' /myn/, 'school' /skyl/ (/styl/ on Whalsay), 'do' /dy/, and 'floor' /flyr/ (although see the discussion of modern /flur/ below).⁹ The exception to this is the Orcadian Island of Stronsay, which follows what we will see below is the mainstream distribution for the Central and Southern dialects and Ulster Scots: 'moon' /mɪn/, 'school' /skɪl/, 'do' /de/, and 'floor' /fler/. As with many of the other Scots dialects, Insular varieties realize *foot*, a member of the BUIT class, with the KIT vowel.

With the exception of small pockets, such as those found in north west parts of Angus and along the coastal strip of Kincardineshire, the rounded front vowel pronunciation of BUIT is presently confined to the Insular Scots dialects. These mainland areas have relatively small populations who, well into living memory, followed traditional occupations. The regions themselves also lie on the margins between two major dialect regions—on this occasion, (South) Northern and (north) East Central. Elsewhere in Scotland and Ulster there is patchy early orthographic evidence for unrounding, although not necessarily the full level of the unrounded variation found in later dialects.

The general tendency in the Northern dialects is that BUIT is realized as /i/ (thus bringing about merger with the MEET set), with the exception of *foot*, which has the KIT vowel: 'moon' /min/, 'school' /skil/, 'do' /di/, and 'floor' /flir/. In Mid Northern A and B,

traditional dialects have /wi/ following /g/ or /k/, as found in the equivalents to *good* /gwid/ and *school* /skwil/. This distinction is perpetuated in much of the dialect literature produced in the region, despite its shrinking use in everyday speech. Millar (1996) suggests that this sub-change had taken place in at least some of the dialects of the region by the early eighteenth century. South Northern varieties may use /i/ for this vowel, although the varieties spoken in southern Kincardineshire and northern Angus often have /e/ instead, thus merging with MATE-HAME. This merger is in line with the north East Central varieties: 'moon' /men/, 'school' /skel/, 'do' /de/, and 'floor' /fler/.

A somewhat more complex realization of the BUIT vowel is found with more southerly East Central and all West-Central, Southern and Ulster Scot varieties. Members of the BUIT set are generally realized as KIT, with the exception of word final contexts and when the vowel is followed by /r/: 'moon' /min/, 'school' /skil/, 'do' /de/, and 'floor' /fler/. In these contexts BUIT merges with MATE-HAME. For whatever reason, this is exactly the same distribution as realized on the island of Stronsay in Orkney.

There are a number of occasions where the fronting of /o/ to /ø:~y/ has different results depending on the phonological environment surrounding the vowel. When Early Scots /o/ (of whatever origin) preceded an unvoiced velar consonant (in other words, /k/ or /x/), for instance, the mainstream pronunciation was, for a while, the expected /ø/. Over time, however, this pattern was confined primarily to the Insular dialects, where the equivalent to English *hook* remained /hyk/. In other dialects, however, diphthongs developed in these environments. In a number of dialects, /ø/ became /y^ʷ/ which, after unrounding, became /iu/, resulting in modern /iu/ or /ju/. In North-East varieties, for instance, 'hook' is /hjuk/. In other dialects, however, the original outcome, Aitken (2002: 43) suggests, was /jʊ/ (probably to be interpreted as /jʊ̯/). Changes to the STRUT vowel (contained in the second element) led to the outcome /jʌ/, so that 'hook' is /(h)jʌk/, a pronunciation until recently common in the Central dialects, largely associated with the

sickle rather than, for instance, a hook for hanging carcasses in a butcher's shop (Aitken 2002: 42–3). Pre-Scots /o/ before /ɣ/ achieved a similar outcome of /ju/ in most dialects, albeit by a different process (Aitken 2002: 43–5; for further discussion, see below). Barbour rhymes *knew* with *withdrew*, for instance. In the Northern dialects the new /ø:~ y/ was diphthongized to /yu/ before <r> and <rd>, eventually becoming /iu/. Pronunciations like /burd/ 'board' and /flur/ 'floor', derived from this sub-set, are still possible in these areas. These mergers with various lexical sets, depending on dialect, must have preceded the Northern unrounding to /i/ in the fifteenth century, since they retain a rounded element (Aitken 2002: 45).

5.5.1.2 MEET (Aitken vowel 2)

The sources of the MEET vowel lie primarily in Old English /e/ and /eo/ (in Old Bernician, also /io/), along with a range of other native (and Norse) close mid pronunciations, whether rounded or unrounded. Norman French /e/, as in words like *chief*, were also included in this class. Lengthened forms of KIT (/ɪ/) also became part of this class, as can be seen in the /i/ pronunciations found in some dialects for words like *swim* and *king*, and in practically all dialects with *sick*.

When Scots first begins to be written, the vowel is likely to have been pronounced /e/, as was also the case in most dialects of English at the time. As with English, the vowel generally rose to /i/ as part of the Great Vowel Shift. Confusingly, however, orthographic evidence, as discussed by Johnston (1997a: 71–2), suggests that an /e/ pronunciation continued well into the Middle Scots period, when TRY and BITE had been diphthongized for some time. This, it should be assumed, led to a gap in the high close vowel position which, the English evidence suggests, was filled quickly. Johnston (1997a: 71) suggests that 'there was variability in the application of the top of the GVS [Great Vowel Shift], although it is not unlikely that vernaculars, as they were in England, were more innovative in

applying the GVS than any Standard in embryo'. This is an intriguing suggestion which might be more acceptable after greater discussion.

Northern diphthongization, the process by which members of MEET and BEAT became members of BITE in some contexts in the Northern dialects, appears to have taken place some time in the sixteenth century. The diphthongization found with MEET in the upper South East dialects, also causing a merger with BITE, is likely to postdate the sixteenth and probably seventeenth centuries (Johnston 1997a: 71–2).

BUIT merges with MEET in Northern dialects.

5.5.1.3 BEAT (Aitken vowel 3)

Johnston (1997a: 72) traces the ancestor of BEAT to 'the open /ɛ/ and /æ/ sounds of the source languages, including Old English 'umlaut' /æ/ and /æɑ/, as well as with the Norman French diphthongs /ei/ and /ai/, which were probably already monophthongized when words from this source were borrowed into Scots. A number of words which had short /ɛ/ (and should therefore have come down to us as members of the DRESS class), were lengthened before and during the Early Scots period. Most of these words, such as *eat* and *steal*, went through similar processes as those found in the same contexts in Standard English.

The mainstream process of the Great Vowel Shift in Scots was that <ea> words, with a few exceptions, merged with MEET during the Middle Scots period (quite possibly in the course of the sixteenth century, if not earlier, in some places). Merger with MATE-HAME, on the other hand, was the norm in some Northern and Insular dialects, as well as in some varieties of Ulster Scots. This alternative merger may go back to the fifteenth century in some places. In the case of Ulster, contact with, and influence from, Irish English dialects cannot be ruled out. It is possible, of course, that this merger was at one point the norm across Scots-speaking territory and that this pattern has now retreated to the 'margins'. The presence of *daith* /deθ/ 'death' and *braith* /breθ/ 'breath' pronunciations in the Central

dialects, along with *great* and its small set, shared with English, might support this view if they are analysed as relic forms. The connections between English and Scots patterns for this set within the Great Vowel Shift were discussed above.

Some words from the BEAT set, such as *quean* 'young woman' and *sweit* 'sweat', appear to have gone through Northern diphthongization, a process by which, rather than rising one stage from /e/ to /i/, a further stage to diphthongization (eventually at /əi/) takes place during the Middle Scots period in the Northern dialects (although the orthographic record is, as ever, open to a number of interpretations). In modern representations of 'Doric', these words are normally spelled *quine* and *swyte* (in my experience, the former word is much more commonplace in everyday speech than is the latter).

5.5.1.4 MATE-HAME (Aitken vowel 4)

Old English /ɑ/, as in *hām* 'homestead; home' and *stān* 'stone', had divergent outcomes geographically during the early Middle English period. Raising and rounding to /ɔ/ took place in an area which spread to include all of central and southern England by around the thirteenth century. Through the workings of the Great Vowel Shift, this vowel came to be pronounced /o/, eventually being diphthongized in most, but not all, dialects of English. In northern England and Scotland, however, the vowel remained unrounded and, by around the beginning of the recording of what became Scots, had become fronted. The reasons for this fronting are much debated. Samuels (1989c) put forward the idea that it was due to hypercorrection on the part of Norse-English bilinguals; this was queried, if not actually quashed, by Britton (1991). The fronted symmetry of Old English /o/ and /ɑ/ in these regions in the course of the Middle Ages is striking, however. I am representing the Early Scots pronunciation of this vowel as /a/, although it is perfectly possible that the vowel in these words was realized somewhat higher in the mouth.

As was also the case with English, some originally short vowels were lengthened due to their phonotactic environment. This may have happened rather less in Scots than in southern English varieties, possibly because of the early loss of final *-e* in the former variety. It has been argued (by, for instance, Smith 2002) that this lengthening was a central catalyst in the inception of the London Great Vowel Shift, since a new long vowel produced a lack of symmetry between back and front vowels (three in the back, but four in the front; the new vowel being pronounced significantly lower in the mouth than was the case with any of the back vowels). This set of changes also appears to have been carried out in Scots: MATE. As we have seen, however, the situation was rather different in Scots because of the presence of HAME (derived from Old English /ɑ/) in roughly the same position, causing inevitable merger, whether immediately or soon after: MATE-HAME.

Due to the workings of the Great Vowel Shift, the fronted long vowel /a/ (a much larger set than was the case in southern varieties of English, due to the presence of the HAME subset), rose, eventually, by at least the course of the seventeenth century, to /e/. This involved, in some dialects, a merger with BEAT and, for many, merger with BAIT. Ulster, Southern, and Central varieties generally merged their BUIT reflex before /r/ and finally with MATE-HAME (*dae* 'do'; *flair* 'floor'), while all BUIT reflexes in southerly South Northern and north East Central varieties merged with MATE-HAME (*main* 'moon'; *schail* 'school'). In Mid Northern A and in parts of Shetland, MATE-HAME before /n/ was raised to /i/ (*een* 'one'; *steen* 'stone'), thereby merging with MEET. While it is difficult to interpret the orthographical evidence, most of the mergers and splits discussed probably took place before the end of the seventeenth century.

A number of sub-developments affect members of the set. *Whaw* 'who' and *twaw* 'two' are historically part of MATE-HAME; they remain so in a number of dialects; most markedly, in my experience, in some South-Western varieties: *whae* and *twae*. Elsewhere, the vowel appears to have been shortened early at /a/ (fronted or retracted, depending on the region). Thus, in Mid Northern, the

reflexes are /fa/ and /twa/. In many Central, Southern, and Ulster dialects, however, an original back variant (probably something like [ɑ]) developing early on to /ɔ/: /mɔ/ and /twɔ/. With both /a/ and /ɔ/ there is merger with the /l/-less equivalents to English *all*, *fall*, and so on. The loss of /l/ in the later Middle Scots period (which we will discuss below) may help to explain some of these changes (in terms of labialization of the preceding vowel); it cannot account for them all.

In many Central, Southern, and Ulster dialects, Middle Scots /e/ in initial position develops a preceding semi-vocalic glide. The vowel generally becomes /ɪ/, so that *ane* 'one' is /jin/. Other members of this set include *ae* 'a particular/single' and *yill* 'ale'. Orthographic evidence for this change can be found from the late sixteenth century on. In Mid Northern A, *clathes* 'clothes' merges with TRY/BITE, /kləiz/. This word may have had a somewhat higher pronunciation (probably approximating to /i/) before it was diphthongized due to Northern Raising.

In all dialects, *bread*, *head*, *dead*, *breath*, and *death* are not members of DRESS, but generally follow the BEAT pattern in a particular area. In Central, Southern, and Ulster dialects, however, the first four cited forms are members of MEET, while the last two are members of MATE-HAME.

Again, we could argue that the 'peripheral' dialects of Scots evince a rather more 'conservative' distribution than those spoken in areas of considerable economic expansion and incipient urbanization.

5.5.1.5 BAIT (Aitken vowel 8)

The BAIT class has its origin in diphthongs descended from Old English, Old Norse, and Old French, as seen with *day*, *they*, and *paint* respectively. In English, this set, in all positions, was monophthongized at a lower front position, merging with MATE(-HAME) and eventually rising to /e/ (with subsequent diphthongization of the vowel in many varieties). This is, of course, the pattern found in Scottish Standard English.

To a very large extent this is the case for the varieties of Scots, where the monophthongization appears to have taken place in the early sixteenth century (although, as Johnston (1997a: 75) suggests, the merger may have taken place somewhat earlier in final positions). But the merger with MATE-HAME (and that set's associated subsets) is patchy geographically. With BAIT, the Insular dialects generally merge with MATE-HAME and BEAT. Many members of DRESS have also merged with this combination. In Caithness this pattern is the norm. In the Mid Northern dialects BAIT is generally merged with MATE-HAME and DRESS. This set of connections is perhaps less absolute in the western varieties of that dialect region, such as the coast of Moray and eastern Nairnshire. In Angus, however, BAIT words are often distinguished from MATE-HAME. Merger between MATE-HAME and BAIT is the norm in most Central dialects. Some retention of the distinction between the sets is found in pockets of Southern and Ulster Scots, however. This suggests either that the mergers are spreading (possibly through influence from the centre; possibly with influence from Scottish Standard English) or that the mergers were innovations in a number of places, independent from similar mergers spreading from elsewhere.

There was a tendency from an early period for the diphthong to be retained word finally or before nasal consonants. In Ulster, Southern, and Central dialects *pay*, *way*, and *change* are members of BITE, while in Mid Northern the first two are members of TRY and the last of MEET. This retention of diphthongs was only a tendency, however, as the monophthongal pronunciations of *they* and *day* demonstrate.

In some varieties, a 'short' /ɛ/ pronunciation is found on occasion with BAIT before /n/. In my experience, this is most noticeable in the Northern dialects with *paint*. This implies merger with DRESS. In other + nasal contexts, however, such as *complain*, BAIT has for a considerable period merged with MEET at /i/: /kɒmplɪn/.

5.5.1.6 KIT (Aitken vowel 15)

The origins of KIT lie largely in Old English and Old Norse short /i/ and the later unrounded Old English and Old Norse short /y/. Old French words with /i/ are often classified short and join this set.

In origin, this set had a high close pronunciation. The difference between TRY/BITE (and after the Great Vowel Shift, MEET) and KIT was essentially one of vowel duration. For centuries, however, KIT has been realized with a much more centralized vowel. The actual vowel is pronounced differently in different places (and, in my experience, between different individuals in the same place). In some places (in particular the Southern dialects) a relatively high and front pronunciation very similar to those found in England is often heard. Much 'darker' centralized if not backed realizations are found increasingly the further north you go. They may be particularly common near to the past or present Gàidhealtachd.

Johnston (1997a: 79) points out that the use of <e> spellings from the fourteenth century onwards demonstrates this backed pronunciation at least in some contexts; by the same token, the transfer of some KIT words, like *dinner*, to DRESS also seems to have taken place during the Middle Scots period. The lengthening and merger with MEET found with some words in some dialects with KIT words (such as *king* and *swim*) appears to be represented in the orthographic record from the fifteenth century on (in other words, by the time when MEET had risen to /i:/).

Most of the words pronounced with KIT in Scottish Standard English are pronounced with that vowel in the Scots dialects. There are a few additions to and subtractions from the set, however. In all of the dialects, the BUIT vowel in the equivalent to English *foot* is a member of KIT, no matter the normal realization of BUIT in that region. This is likely at least in part to be due to the potential confusion between *foot* and *feet* with the Northern dialects in particular. In the Central, Southern, and Ulster varieties there is merger between KIT and BUIT, except word finally or before /r/. This is also true, as we have seen, for the dialect of Stronsay in Orkney.

On the other hand, a number of words which are historically part of KIT have merged with STRUT in some dialects. This is markedly

the case with South Northern, where *wind*, *hill*, and *pill* have crossed to STRUT and Mid Northern, where *wind* is STRUT (unlike the other Northern and the Insular dialects). In East Central, *wind* and *spill* generally merge with STRUT; in some varieties spoken in West Lothian this is also true for *girl* and *hill*. This change may have its roots in the West-Central dialects, where the latter pattern is the norm. In South-West dialects, *wind* and *pill* merge with STRUT. This is also true for Ulster Scots. These crossovers might be explained by the generally centralized pronunciation of the KIT vowel in Scots, although it must be noted that some Southern varieties have more fronted KIT pronunciations, but still present examples of crossover from that class to STRUT. Spelling evidence suggests, in fact, that, at the very least, some merger between KIT and STRUT may have been present by the fourteenth century (Johnston 1997a: 79), although the distance between /ɪ/ (or even /i/) and /ʊ/ was considerably greater than that between /ɪ/ and /ʌ/.

In Shetland (with *speak*) and the Mid Northern and South Northern varieties (with *speak*, *week*, and *breeks* 'trousers'), MEET and BEAT words can become KIT before /k/. Perhaps conversely, a number of KIT words become members of MEET in a range of dialects, as mentioned above. Logic would suggest that the loss of vowel length in the seventeenth century would have made these transfers more straightforward.

5.5.1.7 DRESS (Aitken vowel 16)

In many ways DRESS is the most stable of all the Scots vowels. A large part of the set is derived from a range of sources from Old English, Old Norse, and Old French: primarily short /ɛ/ in all of these languages, but also some short diphthongs, such as Old English /ɛo/. In certain dialects more recent transfers from other sets have also been added, at least in some dialects. We will deal with these issues in the following. In modern dialects (and, we assume, in the past) /ɛ/ is somewhat more front (and high) than is the case in Received Pronunciation and other southern English varieties. My

experience, however, is that all Scottish audients would hear the somewhat variant pronunciations as still forming part of the same phoneme.

In South-Western dialects, however, in particular there is evidence from an early period of lowering of the BET vowel to something like /æ/, although what exactly the <a> spellings associated with this set in this region imply is open to discussion. Following initial /w/, however, the lower pronunciation is commonplace throughout Scotland from an early period, so that 'well from which we draw water' is /wal/. In dialects where 'wet' did not have a long BEAT vowel rising to /i/ as a result of the Great Vowel Shift, including my own, the normal pronunciation is /wat/.

Across a considerably larger part of Scotland, DRESS has an /a/ pronunciation before /r/. This was a common development in early Modern English (as witnessed by the mainstream pronunciation of words like *Derby* or *sergeant*). But its outcome in Scotland was sometimes different, due to other features, such as, in the case of *war* (often /war/, derived from Anglo-Norman *werre*), the lack of the retraction and rounding of /a/ following /w/, normal in Standard English.

A contrary tendency for raising the vowel also exists for some dialects; in particular, perhaps, in the Northern and Insular dialects. The outcome of this change is generally no higher than /e/. This involves some degree of merger with MATE-HAME and BAIT (at least to outsiders, the modern Mid Northern pronunciation for *ken* 'know' sounds more like /ken/ than /kɛn/). This raising may have been an extension of the Great Vowel Shift changes associated with the long sets. As suggested for BEAT above; there is also considerable variation between /ɛ/ and /e/ with a number of BEAT words in southern English varieties during the Early Modern period. DRESS rose alongside MATE-HAME and BAIT. Most of the written evidence concurs with the idea of this being a late sixteenth and early seventeenth century development, although there is a small amount of evidence for its taking place somewhat earlier, at least in some contexts. Modern evidence demonstrates that at least some DRESS words are pronounced with /i/ in Shetland. I have heard people from

western Mainland saying /kin/ for *ken* 'know'; on Fair Isle, *egg* is regularly /ig/. As vowel length ceased to be fully meaningful in Scots varieties in the course of the seventeenth century, mergers and partial mergers of this sort, although by no means unknown before, inevitably became commonplace. It is worth noting that this must primarily have happened in most dialects *after* BEAT, originally the long equivalent to DRESS, had risen in pronunciation, eventually merging with MEET.

In Insular Scots the DRESS lexical set is often merged with BAIT, MATE-HAME, and BEAT. In Mid Northern A the general merger is between DRESS, MATE-HAME, and BAIT. In most other dialects DRESS has essentially the same distribution as in Scottish Standard English (with the different distribution of words such as *dead* and *breath* mentioned above borne in mind). In the Dundee area, *pie* and a few other words, generally TRY elsewhere, are DRESS. In urban West-Central dialects members of BAIT and MATE-HAME where the vowel precedes /r/ often become members of DRESS. This may represent influence from Irish English.

5.5.1.8 TRAP (Aitken vowel 17)

The origins of the TRAP vowel represent a striking and, in many ways, unexpected, merger. Words which originally had Old English /æ/ and connected diphthongs, Old French /a/, both with, we assume, generally front allophones, are merged with the descendants of Old English and Old Norse /ɑ/. These, whether rounded or not, appear to have been pronounced low and back. Alcorn, Molineaux, Kopaczyk, Karaiskos, and Los (2017) make the intriguing suggestion that the early history of TRAP may derive not from Bernician but rather the 'greater Yorkshire' varieties imported into Scotland in the High Middle Ages. This provides *prima facie* evidence for the koineization processes described in Chapter [3](#).

The exact place where the new merged TRAP vowel was pronounced is difficult to say. The solution to this issue is not aided by the fact that both front to centre realizations (in West-Central

Scots, Ulster Scots, Caithness, and the Insular dialects) and centre to back realizations (in Mid and South Northern, East Central, and Southern dialects) are found. While this may represent the continuation of the earlier diversity, with front or back pronunciations being long associated with particular regions, it is much more likely that the back form of TRAP is an innovation. The back pronunciation appears to be still spreading in the South Northern dialect area in which I live. I regularly hear older people using [a], while many younger people have [ɑ]. The date when the spread of the backed form began (or even its origin) is almost impossible to ascertain, given that the primary evidence before the middle of the nineteenth century is written and specialist analysis is rare.

The Scots TRAP set has retained several words, such as *lang* 'long', *watter* 'water', and *warrm* 'warm', which, in most varieties of English, have been transferred to COT-CAUGHT. The opposite can also occur, as we have seen, with the equivalents to *top* and *crop*, at least in some dialects. In the Northern and Insular dialects there is some merger or overlap with the CAUGHT vowel. This is also the case with some other varieties; in particular Ulster Scots and some more southerly and northerly East Central dialects.

On the other hand, *hand-darkening* means that, in West-Central dialects (and related varieties, such as Ulster Scots), there is a transfer to COT, often with following /-nd/, as in *haund* 'hand', and occasionally with following /-r/, *haurd* 'hard'. Other dialects often have a lengthened version of their TRAP vowel in these contexts, as in *haar*, the cold sea fog of the North Sea coast, sucked onto the land when hot air rises. This is pronounced /har/ in West Central, rather than the expected /hɔr/, probably because the weather phenomenon is a rare visitor in the west. The pronunciation has therefore been borrowed from eastern dialects.

As noted in our discussion of MATE-HAME, a number of words which are part of that set in Scottish Standard English (such as *make* and *take*) are TRAP in Scots. On the other hand, a number of words which have TRAP vowels in Scottish Standard English, such as *harm*, have MATE-HAME in Scots. Further examples of this exchange include *Pairlament* and *bairn* 'child'. Vocabulary not held in common

with Scottish Standard English went through the same process, where the /r/ may have encouraged the raising. This set of changes which appears to have been initiated in the sixteenth century, if not earlier, Johnston (1997a: 88) suggests. Examples include *cairry* 'carry' and *aiapple* 'apple'. These changes are likely to have happened due to Open Syllable Lengthening.

In the Mid Northern varieties (in particular on the coasts), TRAP is realized with a preceding palatal /j/ before or after a velar. Thus, the equivalent of *bake*, /bak/ in other Scots dialects, is /bjak/. In Scottish Standard English, of course, this word would be a member of MATE-HAME.

5.5.2 Modern back or fronted from back vowels

5.5.2.1 OOT (Aitken vowel 6)

OOT represents the word set which, due to the workings of the Great Vowel Shift upon Scots, is most markedly different in its place of articulation from cognate words in (Scottish) Standard English. Indeed, although the Scots vowel's place of articulation (in most dialects the vowel is pronounced to the front of central) and length (depending on the succeeding sounds) may be different from the pronunciation of the set in the late medieval period, its lexical distribution is very similar to its equivalent in Middle Scots.

Essentially, there is a near-correlation of membership between this set in its present state and its Old English equivalent. There are some examples of lengthened forms joining the set and a degree of shortening in some contexts, before the Scottish Vowel Length Rule came into play, essentially negating vowel length as a means of distinguishing between vowels. If orthographical evidence is anything to go by, the fronted allophones for OOT (largely pronounced something like [ʌ]), so prevalent nowadays in much of the Scots-speaking world (and, indeed, spreading north from the Central Belt to the North-East over the last hundred years), began to

be found in West-Central and South-Western texts from the fifteenth century on. This was particularly the case, to begin with, as Johnston (1997a: 82) suggests, 'before an alveolar consonant, which favours a front value'. Again through analysis of orthographic evidence the spread of fronting in this context had become universal in West-Central and South-West dialects by at least the beginning of the seventeenth century. Further support is likely to be given in the fronted variant's presence in Ulster Scots, carried across the North Channel at this point. Later ongoing contacts and the possibility of *drift* being at work cannot be ruled out, however. Logic—in place of evidence—would suggest that it is likely that the typical Caithness fronted pronunciation for this set is old. It may indeed have little or no connection to the Central Scots innovation. The fronted pronunciation of the cognate vowel in Modern Norwegian, for instance, might suggest the influence of Norn, but note the back pronunciations found in Insular Scots, where Norn influence is both more recent and more likely to have been profound. Johnston (1997a: 82), suggests an alternative explanation: the fronted nature of /u/ in Gaelic was carried over into the local Scots. As with so many discussions of this type, *drift* cannot be ruled out. Fronting, for instance, is spreading quickly through the GOOSE set in South-East England English. It would be foolhardy, to say the least, to claim that this change is due directly to the influence of Scottish pronunciations.

As already suggested, the fronted variants have been spreading into other parts of Scotland, covering most of the Central and Southern dialects by the end of the nineteenth century. In the *Linguistic Atlas of Scotland* we can see that the fronted /u/ pronunciation was spreading in the South Northern area in the 1950s. We might therefore expect that it would only now, in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, be spreading in the Aberdeen area. When I arrived in the North-East in 1996, however, the fronted variant was the norm everywhere except, in my experience, among older people in parts of Moray and in fishing villages along the Kincardineshire coast. I suspect (as I discussed in Millar 2007 and 2018) that there is hardly anyone left in the second decade of the

twenty-first century who uses the back pronunciation. This 'leap' north for [ʊ] and its variants is, I imagine, connected to the sudden affluence in Aberdeen and its satellite towns caused by the oil boom of the 1970s and 1980s, which brought many migrants north due to the need for a workforce skilled in shipbuilding and related trades.

There is some Middle Scots evidence for confusion between OOT and BUIT, but this is relatively unusual over the area as a whole, suggesting that the latter set was already becoming unrounded in many regions. But similar confusion is certainly not unusual in the present dialects of the Northern Isles.

Words not generally associated with BOOT in Scottish Standard English, such as *court*, *course*, and *coarse*, have retained their historical connection to OOT in Scots. In pockets across the Scots-speaking world, on the other hand, BUIT, no matter its realization in the dialects involved, is gradually being subsumed by OOT (or, if this is an importation from Standard English, BOOT).

In the Northern and Insular dialects, words like *duck* and *tough* are pronounced with /j/ followed by OOT (/djuk/ and /tjux/). In the Northern dialects, *hook* can be /hjuk/ (as we have seen, in many parts of Scotland this word refers (or referred) in particular to the sickle), although this is largely vestigial. In the other dialects, /j/ is followed by STRUT with these words.

Some dialects of the upper South-East have a diphthongal pronunciation in OOT words (so that, for instance, *cow* is /kəu/). It is therefore indistinguishable from the Scottish Standard English equivalent. This is likely, Johnston (1997a: 82) suggests, to be coincidence, however. The dialect diphthongization is relatively recent and was triggered by North Pennine Diphthongization, representing a set of changes otherwise confined to the central northern dialects of English.

5.5.2.2 STRUT (Aitken vowel 19)

For a large part of the Early Scots period, it is likely that STRUT was pronounced /ʊ/, a phoneme essentially now unknown in most

Scottish dialects (and in all but the most 'elite' forms of Scottish Standard English). Unlike many of the other vowels discussed here, even giving a vague sense of when this change took place is highly problematical, primarily because, Johnston (1997a: 83) suggests, of the minim system of writing in the later Middle Ages (where letters were formed by the employment of straight or near-straight strokes, making distinctions between <o>, <ou>, and <i> difficult to discern easily). In Ulster Scots rounded variants are not unknown. This can make the dialect briefly sound like Northern English. Whether this is a retention or an innovation is impossible to say. Some rounding is also heard occasionally in the speech of users of the Insular dialects. At some point in the Middle Scots period the vowel was centralized and, in most varieties, unrounded, to a vowel conventionally represented phonemically as /ʌ/. It is likely that Northern and Insular varieties had, and have, a more back realization for this vowel than was (and is) the case for the Central, Southern, and Ulster dialects.

In general the Scots distribution of STRUT is very similar to that found in Scottish Standard English. As we have seen, in some places some members of KIT have joined STRUT. Conversely, a number of members of the STRUT set in Scottish Standard English have transferred to KIT, in particular in the Northern and Insular varieties; a striking example of this is *simmer dim*, the period around midsummer where the sun has set but the sky is not entirely dark, in particular towards the north-west. The pronunciation of *son* as /sɪn/, along with a small number of other STRUT words, has a much broader distribution geographically. For all but the North Northern and Insular varieties, *dog* is a member of this set. In Mid Northern A in particular some TRAP words at last sometimes become STRUT. This can include *want*, *Grampian* and, iconically, *Banff* /bʌmf/. For many Scots speakers (including me), *bull* has a STRUT vowel. If *pull* is not /pu/, the /l/ is retained and the vowel is STRUT. *Push* is also often in this set. In East Central dialects there is a tendency for STRUT before /x/, as with *rough*, to merge with OWER.

5.5.2.3 COAL (Aitken vowel 5)

In Standard English, COAL is a large class, involving both the South and Midlands of England reflex of Old English /ɑ/ (rising and rounding to /ɔ/ in Middle English; with further raising due to the Great Vowel Shift) and a number of lengthened forms from Old English /ɔ/. Scots has only the latter source for Older Scots /ɔ/. The class is therefore much more circumscribed.

In most modern dialects of Scots, the ultimate result of this set is /o/, produced through a raising from /ɔ/ to /o/ as part of the Great Vowel Shift, before passing through the Scottish Vowel Length Rule. The raising may have been quite late (early seventeenth century, perhaps). In the Southern dialects, however, /u/ is presently common with this set (this involving some merger with OOT). Johnston (1997a: 84–5) connects this with similar modern raised forms from the periphery of the modern Northern English dialects; in particular in northern Cumbria and south-eastern Yorkshire. Although no merger took place between COAL and lower vowels like COT and CAUGHT during the Middle Scots period, the latter sets were already beginning to develop higher pronunciations for some words in some places.

Some shortenings took place in Older Scots in some areas, so that *throat* and *poke*, among others, are pronounced with /ɔ/, although this has been raised again to /pok/ in some dialects, including West Central. Other shortenings, often phonotactically triggered, include *thocht*. Johnston (1997a: 85) suggests that this pronunciation may be connected to Gaelic influences, since it is found primarily on the edge of the Highlands. North-Eastern diphthongal pronunciations, such as *quile* 'coal' and *quite* 'coat' are, Johnston (1997a: 85–6) claims, not attested before the eighteenth century. They are likely to have first been used in the sixteenth century, since the changes which underlie their development, such as /k + y/ > /kwi/ (see BUIT), date from there.

In the Northern and Insular dialects COAL is at least partly merged with CAUGHT and involves some merger with COT. In the other dialects merger or near-merger has taken place with COT. The place

of articulation of these mergers may differ somewhat. In the Central, Southern, and Ulster dialects the vowel in my experience is closer to COAL than to COT, while the Mid Northern pronunciation is closer to Scottish Standard English COT/CAUGHT. The Southern Northern pronunciation is closer to Central norms.

In the Mid Northern varieties, COAL in *poke* 'bag' and *boke* 'vomit' is preceded by /j/. The OWER words *howk* 'to dig out' and, to a lesser extent, *roup* 'put up for auction' are occasionally pronounced with COAL in the westernmost West Central and in the South-West dialects.

5.5.2.4 CAUGHT and COT

5.5.2.4.1 COT (*Aitken vowel 18*)

Until the end of the seventeenth century, most varieties maintained a distinction between COT and CAUGHT (as is still the case of the English of England, as well as the Southern Hemisphere and in some North American varieties of that language). This distinction was largely, although not exclusively, connected with vowel length. In many of the global English varieties which maintain this distinction, it is vowel quality, rather than (primarily) quantity, which maintains the distinction.

Johnston (1997: 87) proposes that the development of Older Scots COT was primarily connected to a shift in lower short vowels. In particular, TRAP's move forward from original [ɑ] to [a] led to the lowering of original [o] to [ɒ]. By the sixteenth century a considerable number of LOT words became part of TRAP in most dialects of Scots, thus producing modern forms like *aff* 'off' (in other words, involving a further fronting); by the late seventeenth century, however, a number of TRAP words, such as *land*, merged with COT in many Central and Southern dialects in particular. By around the same time, the same set of dialects had raised COT from [ɒ] to [ɔ]; Northern and Insular dialects maintained the lower pronunciation; in

Mid Northern dialects in particular, at least some of the set developed unrounded values. In the seventeenth century there were the beginnings of raising to /o/ in some contexts in some dialects. When preceded by a labial, there was a general unrounding to STRUT in the mid- to late- seventeenth century with words like *purritch* 'porridge' and *buddie* 'person; native of Paisley'. This change is likely to imply that the unrounding and centring of STRUT had already happened by that time in some areas at least.

Due to the lengthening processes, as we have already discussed, which were brought to bear in the Middle Ages in a number of dialects, many COT words became merged with COAL. In Western Scotland and, by extension, Ulster, this merger took place at a higher pronunciation (closer to /o/); it was considerably lower (closer to /ɔ/) in Northern and Insular varieties. This distinction still holds strong for many speakers from these regions.

5.5.2.4.2 CAUGHT (Aitken vowel 12)

Johnston (1997a: 89) suggests that CAUGHT stems from a diphthong derived from an Old English, Old Norse, or Old French low vowel followed by /u/, /w/, /y/, or /v/ (by /v/-vocalization, as in *hawk* from Old English *hafoc*). This became /au/ by the early Middle English period. Probably because the first element of this new diphthong in CAUGHT had an unrounded vowel, it did not merge with Old Norse *au*, which became OWER. By this argument, the unrounded first element found with OWER in many dialects of Scots postdates this distinction.

There is a considerable amount of evidence that the first element of the diphthong was fronted (or at least not fully back) in most pronunciation. This can be seen in 'fossilized' pronunciations such as *tyaave* /tjav/ 'to suffer, to endure' and *myaave* /mjav/ 'seagull', found in the Mid Northern dialects, equivalent to Central Scots *taw* and *maw*, /tɔ/ and /mɔ/. As we will discuss further below, in the North-East the second element of the diphthong, /u/ or, more likely, /w/,

became /v/, probably as part of an abortive sound change of /w/ to /v/ in that area.

A number of TRAP words, where the vowel is found before /l/ or /x/, such as *auld* 'old' and *lauch* 'laugh', joined CAUGHT before monophthongization; probably before the end of the fourteenth century. /l/-vocalization in this class (as with the Scots reflexes of *all* or *hold*) began to take place early in the Middle Scots period. Written evidence for this change appears to have been primarily confined, as we saw in Chapter 4, to lower register texts until considerably after it happened. Although <ld> words are not generally affected by this change (with the exception of *haud* 'hold'), there is some evidence that this change occasionally had a broader spread than it now has.

By the end of the fifteenth century at latest (and probably considerably earlier), CAUGHT had been monophthongized in most dialects, probably as an unrounded front (or mid) vowel along the lines of /a/. Some cross-over to CAT was possible; particularly as length became less central to many varieties' vowel system. Johnston (1997a: 90) suggests that, in the sixteenth century, East Central and Southern varieties had a central vowel for CAUGHT (possibly something like [ɛ:]), while West Central was closer to a fully retracted [ɑ]. None of the envisaged sounds was rounded. Nevertheless, the latter in particular is close to the /ɔ/ found with COT. The loss of vowel length in the seventeenth century as a primary means of distinguishing between vowels would have made this similarity even more salient.

Diphthongal pronunciations subsist in the South-West and the far North. While it might be tempting to see the former as exhibiting influence from Irish English, this is less likely to be the case for Caithness. Maguire (2020) suggests that this pronunciation derives from Standard English norms in the eighteenth century. I would suggest that it is also possible that the pronunciations are relic features of a situation at one time common across Scotland.

5.5.3 Modern diphthongs

5.5.3.1 TRY and BITE (Aitken vowel 1)

Arguably the most straightforward change in pronunciation recorded in the history of the English language is the diphthongization of PRICE, to use Wells' word set names, and its replacement at front high position by FLEECE. This is a central feature of both the English (and Scots) Great Vowel Shift and similar shifts found in other West Germanic varieties. In many ways the equivalent sets in Scots also exhibit this straightforward process of change, involving a diphthongization beginning in the fifteenth century. Only in some ways, however, since the shift appears to have had two, rather than one, outcomes, a fact which is particularly clear in the Central and Southern dialects. Primarily this split is caused by the Scottish Vowel Length Rule. It is the only product of this rule change which caused a phonemic split. As we have seen, the view espoused by Wells, and repeated by equally distinguished scholars, that the phonemic difference is only present in Scots, while Scottish Standard English only permits an allophonic distinction, is entirely incorrect for all speakers, with the exception of some ultra-Anglicized products of prestige private schools in Edinburgh. BITE occurs in 'short' contexts, while TRY occurs in 'long' environments. The distinction between the two sets is not merely about (at least surface) context, as the distinction between *ay* 'yes' (TRY) and *aye* 'always' (BITE), mentioned above, demonstrates. Some discrepancies are present, however: the Mid and South Northern (to some extent the North Northern) dialects include *pay* and *way* with TRY, while they are part of BITE for the other dialects. The split is likely to have come into being in the course of the seventeenth century.

Perhaps because it is essentially a general Scottish distinction (no matter whether the speaker employs Scots or not), the distribution of TRY and BITE in Scots is practically the same as in Scottish Standard English (or, indeed, 'cultivated' Ulster English). With the Insular Scots dialects, however, those furthest away from the centre of the development of the Scottish Vowel Length Rule, the two vowels are not well distinguished.

The set *boil*, *hoist*, *spoil*, *joiner*, and *oil* are members of BITE in all dialects (this will be discussed further in relation to CHOICE/LOIN below). In the Northern dialects, *wame* 'belly' has BITE; *quine* 'young woman' (related to archaic English *quean*) and *sweat* are also BITE in the Mid Northern area, while *clathes* 'clothes' has BITE in those areas and South Northern. In some parts of Angus BITE and TRY words can be monophthongized, often at DRESS (/pɛ/ for *pie* is a stereotypical feature of Dundonian speech). In the upper parts of the South East dialect area, *bee*, *free*, *fee*, *see*, *tree*, *three*, *agree*, *die*, *lie*, *fly*, and *key* can be members of the BITE class, due to 'Restricted Pennine Diphthongization'.

5.5.3.2 OWER (Aitken vowel 13)

Derived from a range of sources (largely that of COT followed by /u/; Johnston 1997a: 97), the diphthongal OWER class is much smaller than its Scottish Standard English OUT equivalent. The pronunciation is normally identical, however. This lack of members is primarily fuelled by the maintenance of the OOT class at /u/ in Scots, when its English equivalent diphthongized as part of the Great Vowel Shift. Johnston (1997a: 97) suggests that in Older Scots the diphthong was made up of the COT vowel (at that time /ɔ/, although somewhat higher allophones were likely in some areas). This pronunciation, he suggests, was still present in pockets within the Southern dialects until the nineteenth century (and possibly later in some places in the western Borders). Elsewhere the first element of the diphthong was centralized and unrounded to /əu/ by the eighteenth century. This pronunciation is now universal in the Scots speaking-world. Some varieties have a more fronted variant, which is likely to be due to the nature of the OOT vowel in that dialect. In practically all Modern varieties *bowl* 'kitchen depository' is a member of this class, as are *howk* 'dig' and *rowp* 'auction' (although see the discussion for these forms in COAL above). In the Northern and Insular dialects the equivalent to *roll* (in relation to bread) is *rowie* (although this word usually refers to a particular kind of interlarded

bread roll, otherwise a *buttery*). In Shetland, Orkney, and Caithness *dog* is a member of OWER; in Orkney *old* is also regularly part of this class. *Hope* has the OWER vowel in the coastal strips of Moray and Nairnshire in particular. As already mentioned, there is some slippage in various places towards the use of COAL with some OWER words. OWER may also be used in *old* in Ulster and in pockets of the South-West dialects (with the first dialect grouping, this may be due to influence from local varieties of English). *Ower* itself can be a member of OOT in the Insular dialects.

5.5.3.3 CHOICE/LOIN (Aitken vowels 9 and 10)

In Scottish Standard English, the CHOICE and LOIN sets described here form indistinguishable parts of the CHOICE set. For a variety of reasons, which will become apparent in the following, it does not make sense to maintain the idea of an entirely discrete LOIN set for Modern Scots varieties. The distinction is necessary when discussing earlier versions of the language, however.

The primary sources for CHOICE set members are Old French and Middle Dutch borrowings. From an early period, the pronunciation for the set appears to approach that found today, possibly with a somewhat higher pronunciation for the first element than that found today. Johnston (1997a: 97) mentions two major early changes in some varieties. In the late fourteenth century, monophthongization to COAL appears to have happened with some words, including *choice*, *rejoice*, and *joy*. The last of these probably survives into the modern era in, for instance, 'John Anderson, my jo, John' by Robert Burns. From the sixteenth century on, the realization of CHOICE in Ulster and some West Central dialects (as well as some Fife varieties and the Black Isle dialects) came close to merger with BITE. Some of these convergences may be due to the influence of Irish English. This seems rather less likely for the more northerly examples of the phenomenon.

The LOIN lexical set, including the equivalents of English *boil* and *point*, comes from 'a diverse group of French and Dutch diphthongs,

and the variation is not easily sorted out, since the source vowels may be different in Norman and Francien' (Johnston 1997a: 96). On practically all occasions, as we have already noted, LOIN is merged with CHOICE in English. There is some evidence from nineteenth-century literature of non-standard speech maintaining a distinction between the two sets which is similar to that found in most dialects of Scots, however.

By the end of the Middle Scots period, most varieties of Scots realized a diphthong for LOIN which was sufficiently different from CHOICE to be treated as a separate set. Eventually, in the Modern Scots period, LOIN was largely absorbed into BITE in these dialects. In Southern (particularly, perhaps, south-eastern) varieties, as well as in parts of Angus and in the Insular dialects, LOIN largely merged with CHOICE in a similar way to what happened in the primary ancestor of Scottish Standard English (although it is likely that the merger was wholly independent from Southern English usage to begin with). A minor issue is *eelie* 'oil lamp' in the Northern varieties, where *ilie* would be expected; Johnston (1997a: 96) suggests that this pattern, along with *freet* 'fruit' in the same dialects, may be due to the importation of the forms directly from the Francien dialect (that of the area round Paris) into those varieties of Scots, rather than from the expected Norman source (which would follow the usual LOIN routes). While intriguing, this can only really be conjecture, however.

5.5.3.4 NEW (Aitken vowel 14ab)

The origins of Modern Scots NEW lie largely in the Early Scots vowels /iu/ and /eu/, which derive primarily from Old English sources. As is the case with English, words which had /y/ in French also often join this class when borrowed, although there is some Middle Scots evidence, as we have seen, for that vowel being included within BUIT by at least some speakers. Johnston (1997a: 93) attempts a not entirely convincing argument for why this might be the case.

Although most Scots varieties have /ju/ for this set, with a semi-vocalic initial glide and the second element more fronted in some dialects than in others, there is evidence that suggests the retention of a somewhat high and centred vowel in the first element into the nineteenth century in some dialects. Some of these pronunciations are likely to have been rounded (in particular in the Insular dialects), while others were more likely to be based on something like [ɪ]. A number of words normally associated with this set, such as *few*, developed towards having /j/ + OWER in some Northern varieties.

5.6 The history and development of the consonants of Scots

By the late Old English period (from around the tenth century on), the consonant pattern in Figure [5.1](#) can be plotted.

bilabial	dental	alveolar	palatal	velar
p	t			k
b	d			g
f	θ	s	ʃ	x
m	n			
	l	r		

Figure 5.1 Late Old English consonants

As was the case in earlier forms of Germanic, [h] and [x] appear, following the First Germanic Consonant Shift (Grimm's Law) to have been perceived as allophones rather than separate phonemes. With words with initial <hw>, <hr>, <hl>, and <hn>, this means that

the first element in the cluster cannot be identified as either [x] or [h]. With the first, however, which is the only combination to survive for long after the Old English period, evidence from the Older Scots period suggests a continuation of /x/ as first element for some time, before resolving as a single consonant /w/ (in most varieties of English) or /ʍ/ (in most varieties of Scots).

Throughout the West and North Germanic languages (although not necessarily all of them, or at exactly the same time) there has been a general tendency towards the initial combination /sk/ being put through some kind of change. In most (but not all) varieties of Dutch /sk/ > /sx/ in all initial positions, so that *skip is /sxip/. In High German, /sk/ has become /ʃ/ in all position (/ʃife/). With both languages, the changes took place either before the first written evidence for the variety or in its earliest literary period, in the second half of the first millennium CE. In Norwegian and Swedish, Old Norse /sk/ became /ʃ/ before front vowels or /j/ (/ʃip/). This change passed through these languages in the late Medieval and Early Modern periods. At a much earlier period, Old English developed in a similar, but not identical, way. /sk/ > /ʃ/ before front vowels (producing, eventually, /ʃip/), unless these vowels had been produced by i-mutation (Umlaut), thus suggesting that palatalization preceded Umlaut. This can be seen in, for instance, Old English *cýning* 'king', where the first consonant is /k/ because the following vowel would not have been phonemically front when palatalization as a phonemic split device passed through the language.

Germanic */g/ was retained in initial position before back or i-mutation vowels. With front vowels, there was, eventually, merger with /j/. In final position and before front vowels not in initial position, the affricate /dʒ/ is found. In intervocalic position the [ɣ] allophone survived. While /j/ and /g/ are both generally represented by <g> by itself, the affricate is often realized in writing as <cg>.

The distribution of Germanic /k/ in Old English essentially mirrors that of /g/, with the exception that no difference was made between initial and medial position developments before a front vowel not caused by i-mutation. The affricate /tʃ/ becoming phonemicized

(probably through the route [k] > [kç] > [tʃ]; similar changes have taken place in Upper German dialects, some Scandinavian varieties and in several Romance dialects). The original sound was maintained when preceding a non-front or *i*-mutated vowel. The spelling <c> generally represented both phonemes, as is still the case in, for instance, Italian. On those rare occasions where <k> was used, it only stood for /k/, however. [ŋ] was not, we believe, phonemic until relatively late in the history of Scots.

One feature which marks off Old English from Scots in its various historical forms (and indeed, most varieties of Middle English) is that, while [v], [z], and [ð] certainly occurred intervocalically, these sounds appear to have been perceived as allophones of /f/, /s/, and /θ/. The voiced sounds would not have been found in initial position, while the voiceless would not have occurred in intervocalic positions. The phonemic split which took place with these fricatives is likely to have been the result of the importation of considerable numbers of French words in the Norman and later periods, where [v], for instance, was possible in initial position, and minimal pairs, such as *fine* and *vine*, are now possible.¹⁰

In Older Scots the consonants shown in Figure 5.2 were found, here following Johnston (1997a: 98).

bilabial	dental	alveolar	palatal	velar
p	t			k
b	d			g
f	θ	s	ʃ	x
v	ð	z	ʒ	
m	n			
	l	r		

Figure 5.2 Older Scots consonants

It can be assumed by this point that there has been allophonic split between /h/ and /x/ (although the two sounds remain closely tied in combination with other consonants). Johnston (1997a: 105) suggests that *h loss*, which at one point had some currency across Scotland, is now confined to the Black Isle dialect (which, as we have seen, is essentially moribund).

/x/ was generally retained in Scots, eventually becoming something like a shibboleth of Scottish as against English speech. The development of /xt/ > /θ/ was widespread, although rarely realized orthographically, as it was in a number of Middle English dialects. The change has retreated to the North-East of Scotland, where it is, in my experience, particularly common among speakers in rural Buchan *Drouthie* 'thirsty, a lover of strong drink', related to *drucht* 'drought, thirst', however, is found across Scotland and Ulster. Especially common in Mid Northern is the pronunciation /dʊθər/ for *dochter* 'daughter'.

The approximants /l/, j/ and /w/ were also present at this time. The precise nature of /m/ during this period will be discussed below.

By the time Older Scots becomes fully literate, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ had become fully affricate, rather than palatalized developments of the ancestral form. Since this is also true by this time for all varieties of English as well, it can be assumed that this affrication had come into being at the very latest by the early Middle English period, and most likely earlier.

The change of /tʃ/ to /ʃ/, presently only found in Caithness, as in *sheese* 'cheese', was at one point more common if place name evidence is taken into consideration. The Caithness shift may be due to Gaelic influence, since that language does not have the affricate. That is rather less likely to be the case in relation to the place name evidence, some of which are found in the far South-East of the country. Johnston (1997a: 105) suggests connections with French usage in pronunciations in Older Scots of, for instance, /ʃɪr/, equivalent to English *sir*.

Older Scots had /ɲ/, the palatal nasal, in words borrowed from both French and Gaelic. The evidence is open to interpretation but does seem to suggest the replacement of /ɲ/ by the much more

common /ŋ/ in the fifteenth century. Johnston (1997a: 106) demonstrates a similar development by the French borrowing *ingan* 'onion' and the Gaelic *Menzies* (often pronounced /ˈmɪŋəs/).

/g/ and /dʒ/ are, more often than not, represented as separate sounds. There is evidence for the [ɣ] allophone of /g/ surviving into the early Middle English period in texts such as the *Ormulum*, where a unique orthographical practice enables us to receive a consonant inventory for northern Lincolnshire in the twelfth century. It is quite likely, in fact, that [ɣ] had become phonemic. This may explain why it eventually ceased to be used, in fact. A sound with only a small number of examples in a language will be less likely to survive than one which is instanced in many words. From an early period at least in the written use of Scots, what had been [ɣ] in earlier varieties had become /w/, which retained some of the original sound's velar nature (German, on the other hand, generally replaced the sound with /g/).

The original phonotactic constraints found in Old English, where /g/ and /k/ were not found before all front vowels with the exception of vowels fronted through *i*-mutation appear partly breached in Scots words like *kirk* 'church' and *brig* 'bridge'. But these contexts have not been produced system internally. Instead, they represent borrowings, particularly from Old Norse (most of these borrowings are shared with Northern English usage). Indeed, very early evidence, largely from charters, demonstrates that the older pronunciations were present in the Bernician input into what became Scots, as is demonstrated in place names in Berwickshire and other areas in the Bernician heartland, such as *Chirnside* (rather than **Kirnside*) in Berwickshire. It is likely therefore that, for a while at least, the borrowed and native pronunciations were in competition. This suggests that the pronunciations were perceived by native speakers as being variants, as with /ˈɡarɪdʒ/ and /ˈɡərəʒ/ for *garage*. Against this general tendency, Old English initial /j/ is retained in Scots *yett* 'gate', while Standard English employs the Norse borrowing *gate*.

Occasionally, however, /x/ becomes /k/ historically, as with *selkie* 'seal' from Old English *seolh*. A similar, but much more pervasive, change of this type (so that, for instance, *loch* is /lɒk/) has been spreading from the Glasgow area from the 1960s on. It is worth noting that in this dialect /x/ has long been confined to place names, with words like *night* and *thought* being pronounced in a similar way in the local dialect and Scottish Standard English. Earlier loss of /x/ can be illustrated through place names of some antiquity, such as *Garioch* (/ˈɡiri/, a region in North-East Scotland) and *Buccleuch* /bə ˈklu/ in South-West Scotland.

In present-day Highlands and Islands English the distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants may be somewhat more complex than is general for Scots, primarily because of the influence of the Gaelic system of lenition and fortition on these varieties. Some Scots dialects show similar, if lesser, features. They are primarily situated either in areas near to the Gàidhealtachd or in areas of considerable migration from Gaelic-speaking areas. In Caithness, Gaelic influence may be sometimes demonstrated in an unexpected way. Scots final /t/ is realized as /d/; for example, 'it' is *hid*. This phenomenon is also found where the original syllabic ending on weak verbs is retained in traditional dialects, where the final consonant would normally be unvoiced, so that mainstream Scots *stappit* is Caithness *stappid*.

In the twentieth century, moreover, glottal stops began to be used in urban dialects in place of medial /t/ (and, to a lesser extent, /p/ and /k/. It is likely that this change spread from London in particular (although interestingly it is often described as a Glaswegian phenomenon, both outside and in Scotland). In the North-East it appears that glottalization may be more advanced in rural than in urban varieties, in direct contrast to the stance taken by Marshall (2004).

The voiced equivalent to /ʃ/, /ʒ/, only became fully phonemic in the late medieval period and has never been as commonly employed as most other fricatives.

Spellings like <quh>, equivalent to Modern English <wh>, suggest that, in the Older Scots period, the initial velar element of

Gmc */xw/ was still the norm. Most scholars would interpret this spelling as a maintained /xw/. Laing and Lass (2016) make the case for the spelling actually representing /kw/. Their argument is impressive, although it is more difficult to explain the change to /ɱ/ from /kw/ than it is from /xw/. Northern Shetland dialects do realize /kw/ for <wh>, but I suspect that, given the similar changes which have happened in the West Norse varieties, this may be a feature which springs from a Norn substratum. Norn was spoken in the northern islands of that archipelago until at least the beginning of the eighteenth century. It appears to have been present as a 'feedback loop' in local folk life until the nineteenth century (Millar 2007, 2008, and 2016b).

In Northern Scots (with the exception of the Black Isle), a general move towards /f/ took place in these contexts with the <wh> words. This change, which dates at least from the sixteenth century, may be due to Gaelic influence (Millar 1996, 2007, 2009a, 2010a, 2018, 2020). In the few records we have of Black Isle speech, Germanic */xw/ is realized, uniquely for the English-speaking world, as nothing. This dialect also stands alone in consistently 'dropping' /h/, which might provide some explanation for why this unexpected change has taken place (although see above: /h/-loss may at one point have been more prevalent than it is now; this appears certainly to be the case with Australian English: Trudgill 2004).

In Insular Scots, the <qu> and <wh> words generally merge in traditional dialects. In Orkney and southern Shetland dialects, this merger is at /ɱ/ (so that *queen* and *when* 'a great many' are both /ɱin/); in northern Shetland, as we have seen, however, the merger is at /kw/, so that *white* and *quite* are homophones /kwæt/. As suggested above, the second merger (and potentially the first) may be due to substratal influence from Norn.

Increasingly, speakers from urban Clydeside have begun pronouncing <wh> words with /w/. This may be an influence from English, but it is also possible that it is autochthonous: a similar development has happened in Belfast, despite the norm elsewhere in Ireland being /ɱ/ (or, in certain circumstances, [ɸ]). Whether this change can be connected to the merger of /x/ and /k/ in these

dialects is impossible to say, although the assumption would certainly be reasonable.

In most contexts, Old English /w/ has been preserved in Scots, with the addition of a small number of examples of /w/ words from original [ɣ] forms, such as Old Norse-derived *law* or native *draw* 'to pull' which merged with /w/, as was the case with English. There is some evidence from the Middle Ages for /w/ merging with /v/ (as it did in the North Germanic and Continental West Germanic languages and appears almost to have done in the nineteenth century in south-east England). Most (but not all) evidence comes from Northern Scotland. However, eventually the status quo had been reinforced (or reimposed), except in two features of North-East speech. The original final /w/ in words like *snaw* 'snow' or in *maw* 'seagull', merged with the preceding vowel in Central and Southern dialects, was retained as /v/ in Mid Northern, so that the above examples became *myaave* 'seagull' (associated in particular with Fraserburgh, but well-known along the coast) and *snyaave* 'snow' (although a North-Eastern pronunciation of the Central form—/sna/—is probably more prevalent now). This /w/ to /v/ change also survives in the <wr-> words, so that *wretch* is *vratch* and a carpenter is a *vricht* (in other words, *wright*) in the North-East.

The use of /θ/ and /ð/ essentially follows the historical model in most dialects and is indistinguishable from Scottish Standard English. In Ulster and, historically at least, Galloway, there is a tendency towards these consonants being pronounced as stops. This has, it has regularly been suggested, developed through the influence of Irish English, itself influenced by Irish. In Galloway, it is quite feasible that the local variety of Gaelic, which may have survived in more mountainous districts until at least the sixteenth century, also influenced the local pronunciation. Similar mergers can be found in Shetland (and, historically, Orkney). This is likely also to be a contact phenomenon, since the Norn of both island chains had lost long since Old Norse /θ/ and /ð/ before many local people began to learn Scots and eventually use it as their primary, eventually only, language. In the last century, TH-fronting, the replacement of /θ/ by /f/, has spread in urban West Central Scotland. Whether this

demonstrates influence from ‘Cockney’ (perhaps via the media: see Stuart-Smith, Pryce, Timmins, and Gunter 2013 and Stuart-Smith and Timmins 2014 for discussion)—this change is certainly happening in urban parts of England other than London—or is a native development (or, indeed, a combination of the two) is very much open for discussion. Similar (although older) changes (albeit much more circumscribed in coverage) can be found earlier in Scots. A particularly striking example of this is *Feersday*, the equivalent to *Thursday* in traditional North-East dialect. Depending on the context, initial /θ/ can also be /h/ in Clydeside and elsewhere. Peculiar to Clydeside is the occasional use of /r/ or /s/ initially with *the* in certain contexts.

A striking feature of Modern Scots is the loss of /l/ in certain contexts. Two of these processes have, in fact, taken place, at different times. The first began some time in the Middle Scots period, where /l/ was preceded by /a/ (which might, as we saw above, have had some lip rounding). The combination might well have gone through a diphthongization before a monophthong was produced, running from /a/ to /ɔ/, depending on the dialect. As suggested above, there is some evidence for /l/ loss in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (see Molineaux, Kopaczyk, Maguire, Alcorn, Karaiskos, and Loos 2019 for a discussion). The <l> spelling at least is retained in most writing. It might be postulated, therefore, that the loss of /l/ was not considered prestigious. When Scots ‘returned’ as a literary language in the early eighteenth century, /l/ loss was the norm in writing. Possibly this was the case because, although the writers of this time were aware of Middle Scots poetry and drama, they wished primarily to represent something like the norms of their time, albeit in a new spelling system which makes its interpretation problematical.¹¹ Although in general the change only occurred in syllable final position, many speakers have transferred the change to contexts which do not conform to those constraints. Thus, in West Central dialects, many speakers would pronounce the common place name and family

name *Caldwell* as /kɔdwəl/, despite the fact that *cauld* 'cold' would always be /kɔl(d)/. This may represent influence from *cawd* 'called'.

More recently, a tendency exists for /l/ to be assimilated to the surrounding sounds, often as something like a /w/ glide (for a discussion, see Stuart-Smith, Timmins, and Tweedie 2006). Thus *milk* is often /mɪwk/ or even /mɔwk/. This velarization does not appear to be connected with the nature of the vowel itself. Rather, it is likely that, for most Scots speakers, only [ɫ] is available for the phoneme. Indeed, several varieties of English, including 'Cockney', exhibit similar tendencies, as do, of course, French and Polish. I had a teacher in primary school who was on a personal mission to make us pronounce our /l/s: 'Don't say /mɔwk/, say /milk/' (the latter /l/ highly fronted, a pronunciation which, in fact, most Lowlanders would find utterly foreign). Needless to say, she had no luck whatsoever.

The pronunciation of /r/ varies considerably in Scots. Some older people may pronounce the consonant as a trill (this is likely to be the original pronunciation), but most speakers vary between tap and approximant pronunciations. There are pockets in Northern Scotland where some speakers have a uvular fricative pronunciation (Millar 2007: 63). This can also be heard among some middle-class speakers in the Edinburgh area. Most Scots speakers are fully rhotic, although non-rhotic pronunciations along the lines of the distribution found in most of England appear to be spreading in southern Scotland (for a discussion of these and related phenomena, see McMahon 1996). Maguire (2016) discusses historical pre-R dentalization.

5.6.1 Consonant clusters

While in general Scots and English exhibit the same treatment of historical consonant clusters, on occasion there is a degree of divergence.

While some Old English consonant clusters, such as /hl/, /hr/, and /hn/ are entirely lost before the Early Scots period, others, such as /kn/ and /wr/, survived for considerably longer than was the case in English. As we have already seen, /wr/ survives as /vr/ in the North-East. /kn/ survives in some Shetland words, such as *knap*, which means, among other things, 'to speak Standard English to a fellow Shetlander' (compare Karam 2017). The Moray equivalent is *gnyaap* 'to speak in an artificially "posh" manner'. Examples of this type should be taken as representing the survival of a few fossilized expressions, often associated with local cultural norms, rather than as a systemic survival. This was not the case until quite recently, however, with /kn/ being found in many dialects. My maternal grandmother, who was born in 1896, and spoke a rural West Central dialect, pronounced *knock* 'clock' as /tnok/, where the initial consonant appears to have been fronted, possibly under the influence of the following /n/.

The consonant cluster /nd/ is regularly simplified to /n/ in Northern and West Central dialects, so that *land* 'land; central court in a tenement block' can, in West Central dialect, be /lɒn/. Consonant clusters like /kt/ also often go through assimilation in more dialects, so that *instincts* can be /ɪnstɪŋks/ (or even /ɪnstɪks/). Unlike Yorkshire English or Dutch, the /l/ in /ld/ is normally maintained, except when /d/ has been assimilated in its base form (for a discussion, see the comment on *Caldwell* above).

5.7 Conclusion

All languages demonstrate considerable variation and opposing forms of change in their phonological systems, both across time and across space. Given the territory in which it is spoken, it is unsurprising that Scots should, in contemporary and historical terms, provide particularly strong evidence for variation. Socially conditioned variation and change is not, of course, a stranger to any language. With Scots phonological change, particularly over the last

200 years, perhaps, social pressure for change was as likely to be system external as system internal. It derives from both Standard English as an overtly prestigious code as well as its colloquial equivalent.

In a linguistic sense, the phonology of Scots can be analysed as a path which differs greatly from that followed by Standard English (and, indeed, most varieties of English spoken south of the River Tees), despite their both being descendants of Old English (albeit from varieties of that language which, by the time that language was written, appear to have already diverged somewhat).

Most of this divergence is shared between Scots and its neighbouring northern England varieties, although Scots is discrete from these largely because, in most varieties at least, the monophthongal pronunciations assumed in Scots and English in the late seventeenth century have largely been retained in the Scottish varieties.

Having said this, it must be recognized that the same developments through which Scots passed have spread from English, whether as part of a traditional spread across the border, with Scots lagging well behind English on many occasions, or as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, where English usage, whether from the Standard or colloquial varieties, have 'dropped' into the pronunciation patterns of urban varieties in particular, but also in rural traditional dialects. This would have been encouraged by the English-only policies (whether expressed as such or not) followed by the educational authorities and by individual schools and even teachers.

This chapter can therefore be seen both as an accurate as possible a depiction of local, regional, and national Scots phonology and as a complex idealization of what is actually a far more mixed and sociolinguistically triggered phonological reality. While social background may affect how 'Scots' or 'English' our pronunciations are, it is an undeniable truth that all Scots speakers can move between the systems of the two languages, normally at most semi-consciously and without difficulty. Indeed, particular distinctions may not be perceived as being differences between discrete systems but

rather as sociolinguistically triggered variants derived from the same system.

6

Historical morphosyntax of Scots

6.1 'But Scots and English are the same language: They have the same grammar!'

Within a language family, morphosyntactic difference is often a matter of continuum rather than absolute difference.¹ Swedish and Norwegian have a considerable number of grammatical differences: the presence of a feminine gender in the latter, for example, the nature and complexity of the noun classes in the former, and so on. But most morphosyntactic features are shared by the two languages. The same is true, probably to a lesser extent, between German and Dutch. Because English is often, for whatever reason, embarked on a different development trajectory in comparison to all the other West Germanic languages (with the exception of Afrikaans, which is on a different trajectory again), its discrete morphosyntactic 'signature' is traceable in relation to its West Germanic relatives for everyone—specialists and non-specialists alike. Many—most—of these features are found in Scots as well.

Thus the more subtle morphosyntactic differences between English and Scots are dismissed as unimportant when, in fact, they are at least likely to approach the level of dissonance between Norwegian and Swedish. But these distinctions are not as discrete

when we compare Scots *not* with Standard English but rather with the dialects of northern England, again demonstrating the geographical linguistic continuum of change between this region and Scotland. Moreover, there are times when Modern Scots shares more features with Modern English than its purported ancestor did. Conversely, earlier forms of Scots often appear more like both Middle and Modern English than do the Modern Scots varieties. These similarities and distinctions, as well as how they developed historically, are the themes of this chapter.² In the first instance, however, it is necessary to give a brief account of the history of the morphosyntax of the ancestors of Scots and English and the changes through which they passed.

6.2 Morphosyntactic development in Old English and its Germanic ancestors

Old English maintained many of the structural patterns which earlier varieties had possessed (grammatical gender and case, full marking of the subjunctive, and so on), albeit in a rather attenuated way. Not all functional slots were marked by discrete forms, although most were at least distinct from their most readily morphosyntactically confusable equivalents. With the pronouns and adjectives in particular, the masculine and neuter elements of parts of the paradigms had fallen together. Gender was no longer recognized on the noun in the plural, something shared with all West Germanic languages (but not Old Norse). Case was retained, but in a somewhat 'rationalized' way. In later West Saxon (in some ways the 'standard' or 'classical' form of Old English), distinctions were maintained between nominative, accusative, dative and genitive cases; there were remnants of instrumental and locative cases, but these were more like formalized expressions than elements of the paradigm. It is very unlikely that native speakers would have recognized the residual forms of these cases as being 'grammatical' in the ways in which, say, accusative case forms were. Even so,

there was considerable syncretism between the established cases in certain paradigms. For instance, *þæt*, part of the 'simple' demonstrative paradigm—and ancestor of Modern Scots *(th)at*—represented both nominative and accusative cases when the noun was a member of the neuter gender class. Moreover, by the Old English period, most gender and case information was carried *not* by endings on the noun itself (as had been the case with its ancestors) but rather through the form of determiners and adjectives.³ The dual category was retained in Old English only with second and third person pronouns, although it was still an integral part of the language in these contexts for a considerable period. Like all of the early Germanic languages, a post-Indo-European innovation had come into being: a distinction between *strong* and *weak* adjectives, the former carrying more functional information than the latter, a Germanic innovation related to inflection on the adjective stem. In the modern Germanic languages which retain this innovation, such as German, a more marked adjectival inflection is necessary where there is no determiner—*ein armer Mann* 'a poor man'—than when a determiner is realized—*der arme Mann* 'the poor man'. This 'strong' versus 'weak' distinction appears to be primarily associated in the contemporary varieties with the carrying of functional information within the noun phrase. Its original purpose may have been quite different, however.

6.2.1 The Old English verb

With the verb, aspect, voice, and modality distinctions were expressed less in Old English inflectionally than had originally been the case. Some apparently aorist forms were retained, but merely as part of the general formal inventory of the past tense. Optative and subjunctive had fallen together as the latter. Morphologically diverse indicative and subjunctive paradigms were in use. Passive voice was expressed by a periphrastic construction of verb + past participle; the favoured auxiliary verb was *beon* 'be' (see Kilpiö 1989), although

weorðan 'to become' (a construction still normal in Dutch and German) was also used. The former has descended to us as the norm in present-day Scots and English. Modality was often expressed through the use of modal verbs. In the Germanic languages these were primarily derived from the basic tenses of a range of verbs which abandoned their present tenses. The past tense forms became present tense themselves and formed their own new past tenses. They are referred to as the *preterite presents* (for a discussion, see George 2018).

A major Germanic innovation in the verb phrase was the development of what are often termed *weak verbs*. The inherited verb forms (the *strong verbs*) distinguished tense and other features by the alternation of vowels in the central syllable of the verb. This can be seen in Modern Scots *rin-ran/run* (otherwise *rin-run/ran*). Old English had a further distinction, between past singular and past plural, which, as we will see, had practically ceased to be expressed by the time Older Scots started to be written. The weak verbs showed (and show) past tense with the addition of what in most Germanic languages is a dental consonant (such as /d/, /t/, or /ð/). This final consonant may well be a remnant of the past tense form of *do* (as represented in Modern English *did*) being used with the present form of the verb. In Old English, strong verbs outweighed weak verbs in number; the opposite is now the case.

6.2.2 Element order

It is generally assumed, largely from the evidence of a small corpus of runic inscriptions, that, in the earliest Germanic varieties recorded on the Island of Britain, the language largely retained a Subject Object Verb element order as default. By the time Old English begins to be recorded in alphabetic (rather than runic) writing from the seventh century onwards, however, Subject Verb Object constructions are becoming the norm, where there was no periphrasis.

Where periphrasis was present, as with the use of expressions of the perfective, remnants of the old system survived. The past participle construction generally remained at the end of the clause (this was also true of infinitival constructions), while the part of the verb which carried grammatical information was placed close to the verb. Over time (for reasons which are much debated by scholars; van Kemenade (1987) and Pintzuk (1999) are classic examples of how thorny this issue is) the part of the verb placed at the end of the clause (generally the *lexical* part) joined the other part, close to the verb. This change marks off English and Scots from their West Germanic relations spoken on the European continent. Other subsidiary element orders, such as the inversion and right shift of verbs in subordinate clauses, were normal in at least the more conservative varieties of Old English, even if merely as a possibility (rather than a 'rule', as is the case in Standard High German), until the end of the period. In the early literate period, as we saw in Chapter 2, Old Northumbrian was conservative morphophonemically to more southerly dialects. This would soon change.

6.3 Morphosyntactic 'rationalization' in the post-Old English period

What should be pointed out here is that most of the great changes which affected the ancestor of Scots and which distanced it both from its immediate ancestor, early Old English, and its ultimate progenitor, proto-Indo-European, occurred before the Scots language began to be written. We do have some evidence from late Old Northumbrian, however, beginning with the English gloss to the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, carried out by a *presbyter* named Aldred, probably in Chester-Le-Street, in central County Durham. While in many ways mainstream Old English, the text does demonstrate certain rather unexpected features. On a number of occasions, for instance, the grammatical gender associations of nouns appear to have shifted. Less often, the formal apparatus of grammatical case

appears to be working less well than it would have at the same time 500 kilometres to the south.

Records are scant, but there does seem to be evidence that, at least from the eleventh century, these changes were filtering into the East Midlands of England. By the end of the thirteenth century, it is likely that only in the far South-East of England, in particular perhaps with older and more conservative speakers, did fragments of the old noun phrase system survive. It can be safely assumed (although there is no direct evidence of this happening) that similar changes were carried into South-East Scotland relatively early; the movement of settlers from 'greater Yorkshire' in the late eleventh and the twelfth centuries (as discussed in Chapters [2](#) and [3](#)) is likely to have accelerated the rate of change.

Although we have little or no evidence for how and when these quite remarkable changes radiated into the English-speaking parts of Scotland, it would be very surprising if this did not occur early. Because these changes passed through the various dialects by at least the high Middle Ages, moreover, the morphosyntactic differences between Modern Scots and Modern English are not as great as is the case with, for instance, their phonologies or even lexis.

6.4 The historical development of the morphosyntax of Scots in depth

In the following section, the development of the morphosyntax of Scots will be traced from the Old English period on.

6.4.1 The noun phrase

In general, the Scots noun phrase has descended from Old English in a similar way to Standard English (and, indeed, practically all English varieties), with the expected 'simplification' due to the loss of

grammatical gender and case; in particular, the breakdown of the distinction between accusative and dative forms, with preference being given to the originally dative forms. An argument could be made that *ye*, the prevalent second person pronoun, is descended from Old English nominative *ge*, while *you*, commonplace in southern and central parts of England, derives from accusative and dative *eow*. There has been much variation in both languages over the centuries, however: absolute certainty of origin is practically impossible in relation to unstressed or cliticized forms, for instance.

According to King (1997: 165, 166), some vestiges of the earlier synthetic inflectional morphology are retained in the very earliest Scots recorded (largely in charters written in Latin or French). She argues that the place name *munkeford* exhibits, in the ending <-e>, the remnants of the Old English <-a> genitive plural ending ('the ford of the monks'). In most of these contexts <-is> endings, spread from possessive singular contexts (derived formally from the genitive case form associated originally with the masculine and neuter genders), took over early on from the remnants of the inherited system. This particular place name is *monkisford* from the thirteenth century on.

The remnants of dative case marking can, she claims, be seen in the use of <-e> in constructions like

for ye terme of thir lyfe,

where '*term*' is marked with <e> (the reflex of the Old English dative singular <e>), as well as occurring in the prepositional phrase with adverbial function'. Surprisingly, King does not make this argument for *lyfe*, although the same argument applies; interestingly, *lyfe* is a 'native' term, with, we might assume, close ties to the inherited inflectional apparatus, while *terme* is not. These points are persuasive, even if we must accept that <-e> is not necessarily meaningful from quite an early time in northern Middle English dialects (and by extension Scots). The possibility must therefore be entertained that too much is being read into too small an amount of information. At the very least, this evidence could be interpreted as

representing fossilized, perhaps borderline meaningless, hangovers from an earlier system much outweighed by the use of 'modern' forms of the language which had abandoned (or reinterpreted) the earlier system. For a discussion of how such a coexistence of apparently markedly different systems might work, see Millar 2002.⁴

Conversely, a new morphological marker, a periphrastic analytic possessive phraseology, was present during the Early Scots period: the *analytic genitive*, as in *ye seel of ye saide katerine* (King 1997: 165). This innovation, shared with English, may be due to the influence of French (and Medieval Latin). There are comparable constructions in other Germanic languages, however. As with English, this pattern has retained a degree of formality (of a legalistic type) not found with the sister languages.

With these exceptions (along with plural marking on adjectives, of which more discussion below), the Early Scots noun phrase is essentially identical with the Modern Scots equivalent (or, indeed, the present realization of Modern Standard English). There are, however, a number of differences, some major, others apparently trivial, which will be discussed here.

A marked feature of Early Scots was the use of the plural marker <-is> for the majority of nouns. The earlier wealth of formal variety in plural marking was replaced in the post-Old English period (and in the later Old English period, it is likely, in some northern dialects), during a period when the ancestors of Scots were barely recorded. There is considerable evidence for the changes involved from the early Middle English period, although the most northerly Northern dialects of English lagged somewhat behind the dialects of 'greater Yorkshire'.

<-is> stands in marked contrast to the mainstream (southern) English <-es>, whose spread is essentially part of the same process as that found with Scots. A similar orthographic distinction can be made between the Middle English <-es> and Early Scots <-is> for the general possessive marker, derived, as briefly stated above, from the Old English genitive singular form with nouns belonging to the masculine and neuter gender class. King (1997: 165) suggests that

this difference is rooted in the development of what might originally been /es/ to /əs/ in the southern and midlands parts of England, but to /is/ in Scotland and the north of England. Some remnants of a change of this change can be found in Modern Scots. *Hooses* is pronounced as /'husiz/ by many Scots speaker, while speakers of modern RP would be more likely to have /ə/, as with /'haʊzəz/.

According to Beal (1997: 340), little or no written evidence for the *-is* endings survives into the eighteenth century, with the exception of a very small number of examples in local records, 'the latest examples being *expensis*, *spadis*, *spousis* from 1716–17'. When the ending ceased to be discrete in speech is difficult to ascertain. Beal (1997: 340) suggests that the fact that no eighteenth-century language commentator mentions it suggests that it was no longer pronounced at that time. The earliest postulated loss of <-is> is that of Murray (1873: 155, as cited in Beal (1997: 340)), who suggests that the change to /-əs/ had taken place by the early sixteenth century. As Beal points out, this seems unlikely, given the near unanimous use of <-is> until the end of that century. She suggests that '[o]nce Scots ceased to be a standard language, the constraints against the reduction of [ɪs] to [əs] in speech would be removed'. I am not sure how far this argument can be taken. Instinct—admittedly not a strong foundation upon which to frame an argument—would suggest that this is putting the cart before the horse somewhat. Written norms *do* encourage spoken adherence (at least in certain registers) to usage which is becoming rather archaic, in situations where most speakers have command over the written language. When literacy levels are considerably lower, as was the case in Early Modern Scotland, it is unlikely that the written language would have had such restraining force on the modes of speech of the majority of the populace. As we have already noted, it is difficult to ascertain absolutely the distinction between orthographic usage and actual pronunciation: the survival of the <r> spelling in word medial position in non-rhotic accents is a striking example of this in a period of increasing—and eventually high—literacy. Nevertheless, it does seem likely that the replacement of [ɪs] by [əs] dates from the seventeenth century; given the phonetic

nature of the distinction suggested by Beal and others, it may be that the change passed largely unremarked.

From the late sixteenth century on the plural and possessive endings *-is* were replaced in writing by *-(e)s*, which is very likely to be an importation from Standard English (King 1997: 180).

Non-standard noun plural inflections (as perceived from the viewpoint of Standard English), such as *een* 'eyes' or *owsen* 'oxen', survive fairly well, as Beal (1997: 340) reports. Commentators from the early twentieth century, such as Grant and Main Dixon (1921: 79, as cited in Beal 1997: 340) provide a list of a considerable number of these for what we must assume were more traditional dialects. Many of these, such as *breeken* 'trousers', I have never heard in any dialect, with *breeks* or *brikks* being the norm, depending on the region. I suspect that no-one alive today would ever have used the *-n* plural in this context. The *<-r>* plurals, always in small numbers, have barely survived into the contemporary period. It is not unusual to find *kaur* 'calves' in writing from the North-East of Scotland, but I have never heard it, even from older people who worked in agriculture throughout their active lives. *Breear* 'eyebrows' is still marginally current: I have heard it from elderly speakers of traditional dialects.

6.4.1.1 Article system

Both English and Scots derive their indefinite articles from Old English *ān*, which is also the ancestor of English *one* and Scots *ane*, the cardinal numeral. Old English appears not to have had an explicit indefinite article slot (unlike the definite article, which was part of the usage profile of the simple demonstrative pronoun). The development of the indefinite article can be dated to the eleventh and early twelfth centuries; it may have been present in more vernacular contexts before this, but it is impossible to prove this.

In Modern English, a straightforward use pattern is present: where the word following the indefinite article begins with a vowel, *an* is triggered as a means of avoiding hiatus; on all other occasions, *a* is

the norm. Earlier forms of that language show considerable (and not necessarily rule-driven) variation. As case- and gender-triggered inflections ceased to be meaningful, <n> began to be treated as a phonologically triggered form, in the same way as the distinctive forms *my* and *mine* and *thy* and *thine* developed, on usage patterns based on function only, of a single paradigm, in the late Middle English and early Modern English periods.

King (1997: 167–8) presents patterns of usage given in Table [6.1](#) for the indefinite article during different periods of Older Scots.

Table 6.1 The indefinite article in Early Scots

Early Scots (late 1300s)	Middle Scots
<i>a</i> + vowel or + consonant	<i>an</i> + vowel only
<i>an</i> + consonant or <h>	<i>ane</i> + vowel or + consonant or + <h>
<i>ane</i> + vowel	

Note: <h> is not pronounced in French loans, such as herb.

What is striking about these historically comparative paradigms is that, while Early Scots appears to be evolving in a similar direction to English, Middle Scots seems to be moving in a different, <n> dominant, direction, with, as King (1997: 167) suggests, a difference in pronunciation marking the difference between numeral and article. Such a divergence at this point is difficult to explain. But in Modern Scots there is a stressed *æ*, meaning ‘one in particular’ (as in ‘*Ae fond kiss*’—the pronunciation can vary widely from /je/ to /æ/, depending on the dialect) and a commonplace use of *a*, whatever the phonological environment.

The use of *the*, the definite article, is practically identical in English and Scots throughout the history of the latter language. Modern Scots demonstrates a number of occasions when there are discrepancies between the two, however. Some of these, such as the use of *the* in time adverbials, as in *the day* ‘today’ and *the morn’s nicht* ‘tomorrow night’, are markedly Scots. They are seldom used by Scots speakers when the presiding medium is Scottish Standard English. There are, however, a wide range of uses of *the* (the

commentary on which is summarized and critiqued in Millar 2018: 145–6). These might qualify as *covert Scotticisms*, since Scots speakers use them regularly in Scottish Standard English. Speakers of the latter with little or no active ability in the former produce the same turns of phrase in their discourse. Indeed, many Scots are not aware of the Scots nature of these expressions until they leave Scotland. A representative example might be *John is going to **the** university now*, where *the university* does not represent, as it does in Standard English, a particular institution: any university can be interpreted from the expression. Even more unmarked are phrases like *up the stairs* rather than *upstairs*, particularly since, unlike the *university* example just discussed, there is little or no possibility of misunderstanding by English speakers furth of Scotland.

6.4.2 Pronouns

In this section the various types of pronouns that Scots uses will be analysed.

6.4.2.1 Personal pronouns

The Modern Scots personal pronouns paradigms are largely descended from their Old English equivalents. Several provisos must be placed beside this bald statement, however. In the first instance, as has already been stated, there has been a general collapse of the distinction between the originally accusative and dative forms, with the dative form being preferred for the new oblique context. With *ye* this has gone further, of course, with a single form in place in all contexts. On all of these occasions Scots is in line with Standard English, although the precise dates for the change (and, in the case of *ye* and *you*, the form realized) may differ.

Similar points can be made about the paradigm of *they*. Until recently, all scholars were agreed that this was descended from Old Norse *þeir*, which replaced Old English *hīe* during the Middle English

period because of confusion in many dialects between *hīe*, *hē* 'he', and *hēo* 'she'. In the last ten years, however (see Cole 2018), the argument has been made that *they* is of native English origin. Many of the claims made for this reinterpretation are convincing. It does not explain why *they* originated in parts of England most affected by Scandinavian settlement in the eighth to tenth centuries and that the subject form spread more quickly into the English Midlands and South than did the oblique and possessive forms, however. By the time Scots began to be written down in extended prose, however, all parts of the paradigm are essentially identical with the modern forms.

The history of *she* is contentious but appears to be essentially a development of Old English *hēo*. It is possible that a variant of the earlier form evolved, with a rising rather than falling diphthong, possibly as a result of Old Norse speakers in northern England using their own phonological patterns when speaking English: /hjo/. This new form may well be represented by Middle English spellings along the lines of <3ho>, probably pronounced [ço]. This combination runs counter to the phonological patterns in Middle English and early Scots, however, where initial /hj/ (along with an underlying [ç]) is largely unknown and there is a tendency to shift to a /ʃ/ pronunciation (b). Spellings such as <sch> or <sh>, apparently /ʃ/, therefore follow historically and geographically behind the <3ho> spellings as the changes pulse south into central and southern England in the course of the Middle English period. The direct descendant of Old English *hēo* would be *shoo* in Modern English. This form does occur in non-standard varieties, but the standard form, pronounced /ʃi()/, is more likely to come from the development of Old English *hīe*, the accusative feminine third person pronoun (possibly through an analogous change suggested here, although it is also possible that the /ʃ/ spread through a similar development with that form). Residual <h> forms can still be found in some contemporary dialects from the south-west midlands and south-west of England, realized (h)oo and (h)a (for further discussion, see Samuels 1989b).

Even in the earliest recorded Scots, however, no trace of the original /h/ form is to be found. The Modern Scots form is directly derived from *hēo*, unlike its Standard English equivalent, however. It is likely that this was pronounced originally as /ho/. When this vowel was fronted, it became, of course, /ø:~ y/, as part of the BUIT set shift. In Modern Scots the usual BUIT variation applies, with Ulster, South, and Central varieties having /je/, Northern varieties /ji/, and Insular /jy/. Where there is a distinction between the standard and the local pronunciation for the pronoun, it is my impression that they are in free variation. I for one have been struck by the fact that, although I do regularly say /ji/, particularly when emphasis is needed, /je/ is my norm. I do not remember being criticized for this at school, which suggests that, for both teachers and pupils, this variation was the norm and not worthy of comment—or even conscious appraisal.

Unlike most, if not all, varieties of English, some Scots dialects have maintained, particularly in stressed contexts, the /h/ in Old English *hit*, the neuter third person personal pronoun. It should be noted that, with all third person pronouns, the loss of grammatical gender led to a reassignment of nouns according to (relatively) strict natural gender and (in)animacy associations. With the exception of the Insular dialects, however, these new assignments are essentially the same as those found for English. Conversely, perhaps, the /h/ in *him* or *her* is rarely pronounced in unstressed position, although it is practically always present in stressed.

In the Insular dialects there is considerable evidence from the nineteenth century on for what some have termed 'grammatical gender' (for recent discussions of this matter, see Ljosland (2012/13) and Velupillai (2019)). But while this term is not helpful in this context, it is remarkable how often *he* and *shö* (here in Shetland orthography) are used in these dialects in relation to inanimate objects and places. There are similarities with the habit of using *she* for a ship (or, occasionally, in many varieties of English, a car), but this widespread turn of phrase is fully conscious and purely voluntary. This is not the case with the Insular patterns, the closest analogue to which being the use of *she* and *he* for inanimate objects

in vernacular forms of Australian and Newfoundland English; even this is more conscious and variable. What can be said about this usage is that it does not seem to be connected directly to the grammatical gender pattern of Norse or that of any other potential inputs.

In Modern Standard English, the originally plural second person pronoun *you* is used to represent both singular and plural contexts. This categorical number-independent usage is only avoided in the use of variants of descendants of Old English *þū*, originally the second person singular pronoun, in traditional Northern English dialects. This is a recessive feature, evidence from nineteenth- and twentieth-century surveys suggesting that it was much more widely spread in that region than it now is. It survived in religious language at least until recently. Ironically, the equation of *thou* (originally a sign of close family association with God) with divinity may have encouraged its avoidance in other register-triggered contexts.

In a general tendency across western and central Europe, second person pronouns (or, in High German and Norwegian Bokmål, third person plural pronouns) began to be used to refer to single individuals to express formality and respect. Second person singular pronouns were used to an individual with whom the speaker was intimate, to children and to social 'inferiors'. Versions of this pattern remain in most languages from this region, with some divergence over what is interpreted as 'intimate' or 'formal'. Standard English stands in contrast to that with, as discussed above, a loss of *thou*, except in religious contexts, in the Early Modern period. Scots appears to have followed the same path, whether independently or not, as English. The original second person singular form appears to have lasted longer in Scotland than in the southern language, however (see King 1997: 171).

When we look at eighteenth-century Scottish poetry, such as that of Burns, *thou* is used freely for intimate reference, as in 'still thou art blessed compar'd wi' me' from *To a mouse*. As a boy I assumed that this was an importation from English on Burns' part, under the influence of contemporary and older poetry in English (which he knew well) and, predominantly, the language of the 1611 Bible.

While this is, doubtless, in part the case (*art* is unlikely to have been native, for instance), local sources may also have contributed to his choice of pronouns.

In the contemporary dialects, a discrete second person singular pronoun (with inherited rules about formal versus intimate contexts being recognized) is found only in Orkney (where it is *thoo*) and Shetland (where it is *du*). Some commentators have explained this survival as being due to Norn influence (Hedde 2010); the reality is somewhat more complex, however. There is some evidence that, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, speakers in Paisley, by that time a large mill town, were still using *thoo*, at least in the phrase *seestu*, 'do you see', so prevalent that it became a nickname for inhabitants of the town.⁵ By the mid eighteenth century, however, it had retreated into the more rural North. An inhabitant of Cromarty on the Black Isle, ninety-five at the time I spoke to her in 2005, gave *at's a fine attie thoo as* 'that's a fine little hat you have' as an example of local usage when she was a girl during the First World War and its aftermath. Although no such usage appears to be present now in any dialect of Scots spoken on the Scottish mainland, the survival of the old second person forms in Orkney and Shetland should be interpreted as representing primarily an example of the linguistic conservatism so prevalent in other ways in the Insular dialects. It is unnecessary to turn to the influence of Norn as the central explanation for this survival. (Beal 1997: 345–7 provides an in-depth discussion of the evidence for many of these points; see also Millar 2018).

A relatively recent feature of the Scots system is the spread of *yees* or *yous* as a new second person plural pronoun (thus filling a gap caused by the spread of the originally plural *you* to all second person contexts, as discussed above). This usage, Beal (1997: 45) suggests, was spread to urban centres across the Island of Britain by large-scale Irish migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is certainly prevalent in Liverpool and Newcastle, but can be heard in cities and towns across northern England. It appears to have been used originally only in the Clydeside Conurbation, in

particular in working-class neighbourhoods of Glasgow, but has now spread widely. I hear it regularly in the speech of young Aberdonians, despite considerable disapproval in both institutional and family domains. Older speakers of more traditional Scots may feel the usage is 'slovenly'; my own mother certainly thought so.

Modern Scots varieties (in particular, perhaps, those of urban origin) regularly use *us* in singular contexts, most often in collocation with *give*, *show*, and *lend*, as in *gie's a break* 'give me a chance'. As Beal (1997: 345) suggests, this is a relatively recent development, with Murray (1873) being the first to recognize it. Somewhat surprisingly, she does not comment on the fact that, like a number of nineteenth- and twentieth-century ostensibly Scots changes, this development is also to be found in (urban) Northern English dialects.

A further recent development, as discussed by Beal (1997: 347) is the use of *mines* where Standard English has *mine* (*Is that his pieces?*, 'Are those his sandwiches'; *Naw, they're mines*, 'No, they're mine'). This formation is probably due to influence from *yours* (and, more indirectly, *his* and *hers*). Unlike the other innovations discussed in this section, this appears to be a purely Scots development. Beal does not mention the extended form *mineses*, particularly associated with the speech of children, but also found, possibly consciously and with humorous intent, by adults (Millar 2018: 147). My own experience is that *mines* is considerably more geographically confined (to the Central Belt at most) than is the case with the other innovations. *Yourses*, derived from *yours*, is also found in these contexts.

A considerably earlier innovation is the use of *hissel* and *theirsel* instead of *himself* and *themselves*. This, Beal (1997: 348) records, is found from at least the writings of Sir Walter Scott on, although, since an early period, they have been associated with 'lower class' speech. It is relatively common in Northern English speech as well.

A striking feature of Modern Scots personal pronoun use is the employment of a personal pronoun when Standard English either uses a definite article or nothing, as in *What do you want for **your** tea?*, which does not necessarily imply an individual choice. This is a covert Scotticism, which 'bleeds' unconsciously and effortlessly into

Scottish Standard English, while causing some surprise elsewhere in the English-speaking world. This phenomenon is discussed further in Millar (2018: 150).

6.4.2.2 Demonstrative pronouns

What is now the distal demonstrative *that* and the proximal demonstrative *this* have descended in a relatively straightforward manner from Old English to present-day Scots, bearing in mind the loss of case- and gender-marking in the paradigm, which occurred before Scots was first written. There has been little or no formal variation with the surviving forms, beyond the effects of local pronunciation (so that, in Shetland, we have *dat* and *dis*, while in many dialects, in particular the Northern ones, *is* and *at* are common). Whether these forms represented the semantic fields of *distal* and *proximal* meaning a thousand years ago is another matter (see Beal 1997: 350; Heltveit 1967).

The original plurals of these forms were jettisoned for a variety of reasons in what became Standard English, in the late Middle English period (for a discussion, see Heltveit 1967). New forms—*these* and *those*—were created from the surviving morphophonological material. In Scots, however, the descendant of Old English *þā* ‘those’, *thae*, was retained, while *thir* became the mainstream equivalent of *these*. Much ink has been spilled over the origin of *thir*. King (1997: 169–70) makes a claim for its descent from Old Norse *þeir*, the third person plural personal pronoun, which was, in origin, a demonstrative pronoun (and cognate to Scots *thae*; the distinction between personal and demonstrative pronouns has never been large: see Howe 1996). There is a possibility that this connection is correct; there are problems with its acceptance, however. We could question whether there was sufficient phonological space between *þeir* and *thir* for such a borrowing to be a feasible (nor does it explain the apparently later shift to [ɪ] in the vowel). The fact that *thir* is the plural of *this*, not *that*, must also be borne in mind. It also seems unlikely that the form would retain the Norse plural marker *-r*, when

this is, at best, a very rare transfer indeed in either Scots or English. Other elements of the Old Norse demonstrative paradigms are certainly possible as sources, however.

In the North of Scotland (and by extension in the Insular dialects), there are no overt plural demonstrative forms. The plural of *that* is *that*; while the plural of *this* is *this* (both with local pronunciation norms). Because of the influence of Edinburgh norms during the Stewart period, early examples of these phenomena are difficult to find. Given their modern preponderance, however, it is likely that these forms have been the local norm for a long period. Elsewhere (Millar 2007) I have suggested that this pattern of use was formed under direct influence from Gaelic, where the equivalent of the distal demonstrative realizes no plural distinction. Whatever its origin, the apparently non-plural usage was certainly recognized by commentators from the eighteenth century onwards (Beal 1997: 350).

Until the twentieth century, these paradigms were normal for Scots speakers. In recent years, however, there is considerable evidence that, while the local plural form for *that* is secure, speakers are increasingly abandoning the local plural of *this*. In my own experience, *thir* was associated with the usage patterns of my grandparents and their generation. I have never used it, except in self-consciously 'literary' or 'scholarly' mode. *This* plural survives better in the North, but, as McRae (2006) reports, younger locals in the Inverurie area (historically an agricultural town with close ties to its rural hinterland, but, since the 1970s, a dormitory settlement for Aberdeen) have actually developed a phonologically local form for *these*, pronounced /is/ or /iz/.

Yon and *thon*, the hyperdistal pronouns, are still commonplace in Northern dialects at least, and can be readily heard elsewhere (I myself use *thon* regularly). It is true, however, that it may not be so commonly used as it was even in my childhood in the 1960s and 1970s, a point reflected in Macaulay ((1991), as cited by Beal (1997: 351)), where the *yon* and *thon* forms are considered recessive in the usage of his Ayr informants.

The use of *them* in place of adjectival *those* is, of course, commonplace across the English-speaking world. The spread of this usage is often, Beal (1997: 350–1) suggests, perceived as a ‘recent Anglicism’ in Scotland. In fact, eighteenth-century commentators were already criticizing its use in Scotland and elsewhere. Macaulay (1991, as cited in Beal 1997: 350–1) suggests that his ‘lower class’ informants, recorded in the 1970s, appeared to favour *them* over *thae*. This is not my experience, however: both appear to be strong in heartland areas. Some older speakers, again from personal experience, disapprove of *them* as being ‘corrupt’ and ‘English’. Strikingly, the overtly plural *them* is consolidated in the Northern and Insular dialects, where no such distinction is, as we have seen, expressed in the traditional, ‘native’, forms.

6.4.2.3 Relative and interrogative pronouns

In Old English, relative clauses could be marked through a variety of means, including through the use of a dedicated relativizer, *þe*, apparently lost before Scots became a written language. They could also be marked through the use of <wh> pronouns, the ancestors of Modern English *who*, *whom*, *whose*, and *which*. As we have come to expect, these forms were rather more numerous than is presently the case, due to issues of grammatical case, grammatical gender, and number. You could also, on occasion, use demonstrative or personal pronouns. The <wh> forms survived, however. Their paradigm was reduced to a small number of forms which speakers were and are inclined to consider separate, although not unrelated, forms. In addition, a ‘zero marker’ was introduced. This was impossible in Old English and its close West Germanic relatives but is common in North Germanic. *That* gained prominence at this time (it is not common in Old English but is prevalent in other Germanic languages). There are sets of ‘rules’ in Standard English about when the *wh*- forms are used and when *that* is triggered, rigidly adhered to in, for instance, the grammatical parameters of word processing

programmes. In my experience, however, Scots speakers have a general, although not total, tendency to use *that* in most contexts.

All Middle Scots <wh-> relative pronouns are, of course, orthographically, and therefore phonologically, distinct from their English cognate (Table [6.2](#)).

Table 6.2 English and Scots relative/interrogative pronouns

Old English	Middle Scots	Modern Scots	Modern English
Hwā	quha	whaw/whae/faa	who
Hwæm	quham	[wham]	whom
Hwæs	quhase/quhais	[whase], faas	whose
hwelc	quhilk	[whilk]	which

They are generally used in similar ways, however. As was the case with early Modern English *which*, Middle Scots *quhilk* was the norm when referring to humans. Using *quha* in those contexts became common only in the late sixteenth century. Prior to this, *quha* was primarily solely an interrogative pronoun (which continued to be the case with *quhat* ‘what’ (unlike in some of the dialects of southern England) (King 1997: 172)). Naturally, all the relative pronouns given here could also be used in questions. The use of *the quhilk* as a relative pronoun, along with plural *the quhilkis* (a discussion of whose origin can be found in King 1997: 172), may, King (1997: 172) suggests, represent an attempt to differentiate between interrogative and relative use. It is difficult to see exactly why this particular pronoun was singled out for this treatment, however. She suggests that the usage may be of French origin (this connection may also be possible for the plural adjective forms discussed in 6.4.3 below).

In Modern Scots, the use of *whilk* as both interrogative and relative pronoun is essentially an artificial continuation of the Middle Scots usage pattern in ‘high’ literature. It is a marker of literary Scots and might be taken by some, whether fairly or unfairly, as representing Scots as produced by a non-Scots speaker. The same is true for *quham*. The use of *whase* appears similar to these

situations, although it must be recognized that North-East *faas* appears to be an artless continuation of the Middle Scots usage. Elsewhere, *(th)at's* is more common in these contexts, as in *he's the lad that's faither's deid* 'he's the boy whose father is dead', in my experience. From the late sixteenth century onwards, *quhilk* came to be replaced by *which* in writing. It is highly likely that this change resulted from the influence of Standard English (King 1997: 180).

In urban central Scotland (in particular in the Glasgow area), the descendant of Middle Scots *quha* 'who', which in the surrounding rural districts was, until very recently at least, *whaw* /mɔ/, has been moribund for some time. This has been replaced by what is apparently the local pronunciation, /hu/, of English *who*. This might have been imported through school and other centralized institutions, although the fact that /hu/ is found at all social levels suggests that there might even have been a double-pronged entry for the new form: from Standard English and also, perhaps, from at least one type of vernacular, whether that be Irish English or Highlands and Islands English (or both). Elsewhere in the Scots-speaking world /hu/ is certainly common, but the ancestral form, whether realized as /mɔ/, /ma/, /fa/, or /kwa/, survives well. In the Aberdeen area it is practically universal in the language of traditional speakers of rural Scots, but speakers of the urban vernacular, *Toonser spik*, also regularly use it. Whether the form used is of Scottish or English origin, it is essentially confined to interrogative contexts, the relative marker being *(th)at*.

The adoption of /hu/ for 'who' may explain the apparently English pronunciation /həu/ (rather than /hu/) for *how*. This is despite the divergence in meaning between Scots (and Scottish Standard English, often), where the word most commonly means 'for what reason' in Scots, and English, where the word means 'in what way' (the Scots equivalent to this is, unsurprisingly, *whit/fit wey*. In Aberdeen, however, Scots *noo* 'now' is /nəu/ when used by assistants, not only in 'high prestige' shops but also in shops in working-class communities across the city. This is particularly the case when it is primarily used as an introductory request for the customer to state their requirements. Elsewhere (Millar 2007: 48) I

have suggested that this may not be an importation from Standard English (or at least not solely) but is employed as a stressed feature to elicit particular actions or thoughts. *How* (at least as an interrogative) often represents similar contexts.

In North-East Scots the original /u/ form remains the norm. This may be because of the highly marked /fu/ pronunciation, normally represented in writing as *foo* (despite using a form which is homophonous with words for 'drunk' and 'full'). As well as reminding us that *how* is historically a <wh> word, this form may also be sufficiently different from *who* as to be perceived as local and separate.

In relation to spoken usage, Beal (1997: 368) remarks that

While the modern written language shows WH- forms in nearly all styles and all syntactic positions, there remains a significant residue of *that* forms in the spoken language.

She suggests, in fact, that this 'dichotomy' can be traced back well into the Middle Scots period. It has indeed been claimed that the *wh*- forms are not native to, as Murray (1873: 194, 196) suggests, 'spoken Scotch'. Following this analysis, it is natural to assume that the *Scots wha hae* 'Scots who have' of Burns is actually a literary imposition from Standard English (with the further implication—unlikely in Burns' case—that writers who use such formulation may be more comfortable in at least writing in the latter variety). It is quite possible that this is often the case, but the evidence of modern vernacular usage given above counts against the view. Tulloch (1980: 275, as cited in Beal (1997: 359)) observes, with particular reference to the novels of Scott, that

Rather than seeing them [*wh*- pronouns] as a literary convention, we might see them as a realistic representation of the tendency of the spoken and written forms of the language to interact and influence each other, especially in any speech which has even a small degree of formality.

Scott's language was, of course, for someone of an upper-middle-class background, born in the latter part of the eighteenth century, somewhat unrepresentative of the speech of his peers. Nonetheless,

it might be claimed that the tension between formal and residual vernacular use of the *wh*- forms has encouraged the somewhat confused situation we find today. Nevertheless, I cannot be the only Scots speaker who is made uncomfortable by the use of more marginal forms like *wham* in writing; particularly, perhaps, when they are found in modern fictional dialogue.

6.4.3 Adjectives

As with the apparently 'dative' examples cited above, there may be some evidence for survival of remnants of strong and weak adjective paradigms in the very earliest Scots material found in largely Latin documents. Craigie (1925: 64, as cited by King 1997: 173) provides examples of this survival with place names such as *blake burne*, *brade wude*, and *kalde strem*. As King points out, however, there is considerable variation (except perhaps in the earliest documents) between *-e* and nothing, suggesting that the use of *-e* was in many ways an example of orthographic variation, rather than a true survival of Old English usage (although, as Samuels (1989a) points out, some degree of maintenance of the distinction between strong and weak adjective forms remained in London English until at least the middle of the fourteenth century).

Even in the earliest documents containing Scots, there is little unambiguous evidence for the remnants of the Old English plural adjective inflections. In the Middle Scots period, however, plurality, using the morpheme *-is*, as with the most common plural marker on the noun, is shown on some adjectives, in particular in formal or public contexts. Lass (1992: 116, as cited by King (1997: 173)), claims that use of the plural ending is confined largely to adjectives of Romance origin in postposed position (as history has shown, this context is a rather artificial one in both Scots and English, leading to a few fossilized forms, such as *sergeants major*, a 'rule' largely ignored by most speakers). King (1997: 173) points out, however, that, even though this might be the most prevalent context for the

usage, phrases such as *the foresaid^{is} lordis*, 'the foresaid lords', demonstrate a 'native' adjective which occurs before the noun it modifies with this plural marker.

Given that this construction rarely occurs in less formal and more private writing, as well as in all but the most elevated registers of poetry, to what extent was this usage 'native'? If it is not 'native', did people actually realize these distinctions in their (formal) speech or are they purely for the written record, influenced by French and Latin usage? Was it a widespread affectation? Although King (1997: 173) makes a comparison between *-is* being used as the adjective plural marker and the rather more sociolinguistically distributed *quhilkis*, discussed above, the total absence of even fossilized forms of the marked plural adjective structure into Modern Scots may give us some notion of how central that structure was to the language.

This usage *might* represent a conceptual continuation of the Old English plural marking in adjectives. This seems unlikely, however, for a variety of reasons. The formal lay-out of the *-is* forms is strikingly different from that found for Old English. Moreover, the sociolinguistic trigger for use in Middle Scots makes unconscious survival seem quite unlikely. Equally improbable is the idea that the concept of adjective plurality lived on in speakers' minds long after they were discrete in their language, only to be reborn at a later stage in the language's development. Such an explanation appears to me to steer close to mysticism.

There is a possibility that the Scots plural adjectives, like the development of English *those* and *these* at around the same time, represent the use of the dominant noun plural marker in other contexts where plural expression is desired. While the initial stimulus might have been similar, however, the English new formations were successful, while the Scots forms appear to have been at best marginal and certainly eventually moribund in the language's system.

6.5 The verb

At one level, Modern Scots and Modern English share a large part of their verb systems. When we dig deeper, however, we quickly find distinguishing features present throughout the histories of the sister varieties' verb paradigms.

6.5.1 Verb inflections

6.5.1.1 The Northern present tense rule

One of the most striking features of the Older Scots (and the most northerly of Northern Middle English) dialects is that, unlike modern Standard English, they have two verb paradigms in the indicative. These are illustrated by King (1997: 175; here with the order of her tables reversed) in Tables [6.3](#) and [6.4](#).

Table 6.3 The 'mainstream' present indicative verb paradigm in Older Scots, late Northern Middle English, and Southern Standard English of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

	Older Scots	Southern Standard English	Northern English
Singular 1 st	<i>no ending</i>	<i>no ending</i>	<i>no ending</i>
Singular 2 nd	-(i)s	-(e)st	-(i)s/-(e)s
Singular 3 rd	-(i)s	-(e)th/-(e)s	-(i)s/-(e)s
Plural	<i>no ending</i>	<i>no ending</i> /-(e)n	<i>no ending</i>

Table 6.4 The 'alternative' present indicative verb paradigm in Older Scots, late Northern Middle English, and Southern Standard English of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

	Older Scots	Southern Standard English	Northern English
Singular 1 st	-(i)s	<i>no ending</i>	-(i)s/-(e)s
Singular 2 nd	-(i)s	-(e)st	-(i)s/-(e)s
Singular 3 rd	-(i)s	-(e)th/-(e)s	-(i)s/-(e)s
Plural	-(i)s	<i>no ending</i> /-(e)n	-(i)s/-(e)s

The paradigms illustrated in Table [6.3](#) are very similar to each other. No variety realizes an overt marker for first person singular. Northern English and Scots varieties exclusively have *-s* endings for third person singular (with Scots having the universal *-is* ending when the nature of the final sound in the verb root demanded it). In this they are 'modern' in comparison with Standard English, which would take some time before *-(e)s* becomes the norm in writing in particular. In the second person singular paradigms, Scots and Northern English appear to have gone through a syncretism of the two original endings (represented intact in the Standard English paradigm). This may have happened due to attrition on the *-st* ending (particularly common in unstressed contexts); alternatively, the third person singular form may have spread into the second as an originally 'alien' form (if we can talk in those terms; see de Haas 2011, Cole 2014, and Fernandez-Cuesta 2015 for further discussion). The Standard English of the time maintained a distinction between the forms of the second and third person singular inflections (although this would eventually be displaced by the importation of the second person plural form, except in certain contexts, in the course of the Early Modern period). In all varieties the plural form realized in Old English, somewhat different from dialect to dialect, has gone through such attrition that no ending has remained, with the exception of the minority *-(e)n* ending in Standard English, which itself would soon become moribund.

The paradigms shown in Table [6.4](#) are strikingly different, however. In both the north of England and Scots (from the first time the latter is recorded in extended pieces, in fact), a new paradigm has developed whereby the *-s* ending has been universalized throughout the system. In a sense this is an extension of the paradigm in Table [6.3](#), although the plural forms are found in a considerable number of examples; it is not a matter of adding a few examples to the usage.

It is not unknown for languages, over time, to replace a rather complex synthetic means of representing number and person distinctions in the verb with one in which pronouns and plural noun marking carry this information, with very limited (or no) inflectional

distinctions being made. Indeed Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian are, in marked contrast to their relatives Icelandic and Faeroese, almost free of person and number inflections in the indicative verb paradigm, a process which appears to have taken place rapidly in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period, possibly as a result of large-scale contact with Low German. King (1997: 175–6) demonstrates a potential descent from Old Northumbrian for both the Table [6.3](#) and Table [6.4](#) paradigms, while also suggesting that the latter may have come about through contact with the Old Norse spoken in northern England during the period of Scandinavian settlement. But these paradigms are not truly in competition with each other in Early Scots. They may well have separate origins but, at least by the time Scots was fully written down, they are realized as serving largely separate functions.

King describes the system in following way (1997: 175; I have not reproduced her italicization):

... when the subject is an immediately adjacent pronoun (either preceding or following the verb) which is first person singular, or first, second or third person plural, then the verb has no ending.

Thus the Table [6.3](#) paradigm, the one closest to the southern Standard English layout, in fact forms part of a special case, albeit a special case which, given the level of use of verbs in everyday discourse, is not at all an uncommon one. The innovative system in Table [6.2](#) actually represents the norm, in many ways.

How this system works can be seen in the following example, given by King (1997: 175):

I grant and also bindis and oblissis ye 'I grant and also bind and oblige you',

where the zero first person form is found only in the immediate vicinity of the pronoun.

Strikingly, two of the most common verbs—whether used lexically or in an auxiliary context—had two different paradigms in Early Scots, depending on whether there was an adjacent personal

pronoun or not (King 1997: 178). King (1997: 179) lays out the paradigms for *have* as in Table [6.5](#).

Table 6.5 Early Scots *have* paradigms

	Adjacent pronoun	No adjacent pronoun
Singular 1 st	<i>have (haf/hef)</i>	<i>has/hes</i>
Singular 2 nd	<i>haist/has (hes)</i>	<i>has/hes</i>
Singular 3 rd	<i>has/hes</i>	<i>has/hes</i>
Plural	<i>hav(e)/haif</i>	<i>has/hes</i>

The equivalent paradigm for *be* is given in Table [6.6](#).

Table 6.6 Early Scots *be* present paradigms

	Adjacent pronoun	No adjacent pronoun
Singular 1 st	<i>am</i>	<i>is/be</i>
Singular 2 nd	<i>art</i>	<i>is/be/beis</i>
Singular 3 rd	<i>is</i>	<i>is/be/beis</i>
Plural	<i>ar(e)</i>	<i>is/be/beis</i>

Probably because *be* is the only verb which preserves a distinction between numbers in the past tense, the Northern Present Tense Rule is, uniquely, realized in the past tense for this verb. The fact that this distinction is only meaningful in the forms used in the plural is indicative of the lack of person distinctions in the singular, already present in Old English (Table [6.7](#)).

Table 6.7 Early Scots *be* past paradigms

	Adjacent pronoun	No adjacent pronoun
Singular 1 st	<i>wes</i>	<i>wes</i>
Singular 2 nd	<i>wes</i>	<i>wes</i>
Singular 3 rd	<i>wes</i>	<i>wes</i>

	Adjacent pronoun	No adjacent pronoun
Plural	<i>wer</i>	<i>wes</i>

How much of this double system survived into Modern Scots? Something like the apparently rule driven system described above does appear to have survived into the early nineteenth century. Sometimes this may be unconscious when written Standard English is being attempted, as in MacQueen's (1957: 137, as cited in Beal (1997: 356)) citation from a 1772 Dundee Burgh record

They ... statute and enact ... and prohibit and discharge ... and appoints this prohibition.

It could be argued, however, that only elements of the original system (such as the use of -s on the final verb) are found. It is likely that this particular example represents a recent development of opposition between the native, spoken, and the prestige, written, norms.

The system is well represented in the literary material from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; not necessarily only in the speech of 'lower class' speakers, as Tulloch (1980: 287, as cited in Beal (1997: 356) reports in relation to the novels of Sir Walter Scott (it also appears regularly in Scott's diaries and correspondence). Something like this system is also discussed in the work of a number of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries commentators, although more emphasis appears to be placed on the nature of the inherited paradigm than on its regularity in the language use of the speech communities involved. Certainly, following Beal's (1997: 356) analysis of late twentieth-century evidence, elements of the distinction remain in everyday speech, although perhaps largely confined to members of the 'lower class', particularly because the twin paradigm is likely to be a feature which is regularly marked out as aberrant in educational and other official domains.

6.5.1.2 Past tense marking

In Old English, as we have seen, two central means of showing past tense and past participle marking on the verb existed. The first of these were the *strong verbs*, where these distinctions were shown by vowel use in the past tense and in the past participle. These were probably the most common form of verb. The second type of past tense and participle marking were the *weak verbs*, where the past tense and (generally) the past participle were marked by the addition of a dental suffix.

In Scots, and in all varieties of English, there is a general tendency—a *drift*, to use Sapir's metaphor, discussed above—for strong verbs to become weak. The actual verbs affected may differ between Scots and English, so that, while English has retained the strong pattern *give—gave—given*, Modern Scots has a weak pattern: *gie—gied—gien/gied*. King (1997: 178) suggests that this change did not take place until the eighteenth century; certainly this is when it begins to be recorded in writing. As King (1997: 178) points out, this is one part of three major changes which took place during the period between Old English and the end of the Middle Scots period.

The second is the loss of the distinction between singular and plural in the past tense of strong verbs, with one vowel, rather than two, marking tense. Coupled with the breakdown of discrete endings for person and number in the past tense of both strong and weak verbs, this involved a major change in the conceptual framework of the language, with morphological marking of plurality only being realized in the present indicative, with the exception of the verb *to be*, where a distinction between *wes* and *were* was retained by many speakers. Consonant distinctions between singular and plural past tense (and past participle) are, King (1997: 178) suggests, also part of this pattern, with verbs like Old English *ceosan—ceas—curon—(ge)coren*, 'choose', where the variation between <s> and <r> is a product of Verner's Law, becomes Older Scots *chese—chesit* (used for both singular and plural)—*chosen*.

The third category King mentions is arguably the least important in relation to our discussion of the development of Scots tense

marking: the original seven classes of the Germanic strong verb coalesce to a considerable degree from the late Old English period. *Speak*, originally a member of Class V of this system, 'takes on the vocalism of class IV in its past participle *spokin* rather than **spekin*' (King 1997: 178), possibly due to analogy with verbs like *break*. In fact it could be argued that, rather than there being separate strong verb classes, there is now a series of patterns, such as *ring—rang—rung* and *break—broke—broken* towards which the relatively few remaining strong verbs have gradually moved.

King (1997: 177) also comments on anomalous weak verbs, such as *think—thocht* and *bring—brocht*. Perhaps most interestingly, she traces the Scots past tense variant *brung* to Old English *brungen* which, she comments, is 'found only in poetry'. This is an intriguing suggestion, although it would have to be recognized that analogy between *ring—rang/rung—rung/rang* and *bring* is at least a further likely spur to the development, leading to a structure along the lines of *bring—brang/brung—brung/brang*. In my experience, this 'new' system is urban, but that it is gradually moving into the more traditional heartlands of the rural interior. It is also heard throughout the English-speaking world. I hear it regularly in North American vernacular speech.

These analogical forces are also at work in the variation felt in Modern Scots between *run* and *ran* and *drank* versus *drunk* in past tense and past participle contexts, such that speakers may say *Ah hiv ran* 'I have run' and *Ah drunk three pints* 'I drank three pints'. These forms are also found in various forms of vernacular English and, as is the case with several apparent innovations of the modern age which may disseminate from urban areas, they are frowned upon both by official protectors of English language hegemony, and by conservative speakers of traditional dialects. What is certainly true to say is that several other modern usages, such as *Ah hiv went* 'I have gone' or *Ah dune it* 'I did it', can be perceived as part of the spread of general English colloquial innovations.

Rather more prestigious is the survival of *proven* as a potential variant to English *proved*. In fact, an argument can be made, but will

not be rehearsed here, which suggests that the two past participles are not exact synonyms in Scots. This survival, in comparison with several similar usages, such as *approven* ‘approved’, reported in the eighteenth century (Beal 1997: 354) but long since moribund, may be due to the (in)famous Scottish third verdict possible in jury trials: *not proven* (meaning something like ‘we think you are guilty, but we cannot prove it’, a useful avoidance of ‘double jeopardy’, since retrial for the same offence is rendered possible). *Proven* appears, in fact, to be spreading in mainstream (British) English (although without the legal trappings), albeit with a /pruv/ rather than the traditional Scottish /prov/ first syllable.

Old English had a small set of verbs which had the weak verb dental ending, but also had an apparently strong verb alternation in vowels between present and past. The most common of these are *tell—told* and *sell—sold*. In Modern Scots the vowel variation has disappeared, probably largely through the forces of analogy: *tell—telt* and *sell—selt*. King (1997: 178) suggests that the former verb at least was moving towards its new past tense form by the end of the sixteenth century.

Go is a particularly striking irregular verb, since it does not have a past tense descended from the earlier dialects of Germanic (this is a feature of all Germanic languages, at least historically). The preferred ‘manufactured’ past tense for Middle Scots *gae* was *gaed*. This form continues to be used regularly, especially in traditional dialects. It is also much used in literature. In urban vernaculars in particular, however, the English form *went* is common. As is the case with many non-standard varieties of English, *went* is commonly used as the past participle. The past participle in more traditional varieties can be either *gaen* or *gaed*.

6.5.1.3 Weak verb endings

In Older Scots, the past tense of weak verbs was generally represented by the *-it* inflection, rather than the English equivalent, *-ed* and its variants (for a discussion of the nuances of this issue, see

Beal (1997: 351)). Remnants of this system can be found in speech (and, reflexively, in writing), but variation between /d/ and /t/ has become marked. The schwa preceding the /t/ has also progressively been elided in Modern Scots, although several older forms have been maintained. Many of these thrive. There are even examples of innovative use, such as *hurtit*, the past tense and past participle of *hurt*.

It is difficult to judge whether the *-d* forms presently found in spoken (and written) Scots, as well as this 'schwa loss', are importations from English or are further examples of the *drift* which can affect similar contexts in closely related varieties without any immediate influence from one upon the other. It is very likely that both processes are at work in Scots, although the near-complete use of *-d* rather than *-t* in official records and formal letters written in Scotland by the beginning of the eighteenth century does suggest overt influence from Standard English (MacQueen 1957: 138, as cited in Beal 1997: 351), as does the evidence of 'competition' between the variants in the course of the seventeenth century.

The 'rules' which underlie the respective use of *-(e)t* and *-(e)d* in Modern Scots have been much debated by scholars over the last 150 years, with some, as Beal (1997: 351) points out, being rather more doctrinaire and absolute in their position than others. A fair analysis of the matter can be found in Millar (2018: 153). It should be noted that one dialect, that of Caithness in the far north of the Scottish mainland, exhibits *no* /t/ verb endings forms in its traditional form, so that *biggit* 'built' is pronounced with final /əd/. This apparent change may be caused by a desire to avoid specifically Gaelic phonological features, a point mentioned in Chapter 5. It may also be due, however, to particularly strong analogical forces being at work in this context in this area (again, it is quite possible that both explanations are entirely valid).

A number of Scots verbs maintain a syllabic *-it* where English no longer has this feature. Perhaps the most common of these is *keepit* 'kept'. This form also contains a further phenomenon which on occasion distinguishes Scots from English: the survival of historically 'long' vowels where English has 'short' equivalents; other examples

of this may include /herd/—rather than /hɛrd/—for *heard*. *Catchit* ‘caught’ represents the survival of an older ‘regular’ verb when Standard English has, somewhat unexpectedly, developed *caught*. This change may have somehow been based on an analogy with *think—thought* or equivalents.⁶

6.5.2 Modality

In Modern Scots, as in Modern English, the subjunctive is essentially moribund. It is used in a number of fossilized phrases, such as *God save the King* and *Hell mend ye!*, as well as in phrases such as *if that **were** the case*. Given that *if that **was** the case* is at least as common in everyday language as the last, and that expressions like *if he **go** tomorrow*, occasionally seen in academic prose but borderline absurd in speech, the use of a subjunctive form can be seen as essentially a stylistic choice. This reality is strikingly different from the status of the subjunctive mood in Old English (and in more conservative modern Germanic languages, such as Standard German), represented by a full paradigm of forms, largely discrete from the indicative forms. The issue, essentially, is that, in Modern English and Scots (and to a large extent in the Middle stages of both languages) subjunctive usage is normally only discrete from indicative usage in the singular (and then only with the first and third persons because, as we have seen, the second person forms are importations from the plural, except where the original singular form has been retained). Given this issue, the purpose of the subjunctive is essentially compromised.

This was essentially also the case for Middle Scots, which rarely realizes overt subjunctive forms. As King (1997: 179) points out, however, the subjunctive is occasionally visible, due to the workings of the Northern Present Tense Rule, as with *y[a]t thou **kepe** jt secretly* ‘that you may keep it secretly’, where the indicative would be *kepis*.

The essential collapse of the primary means by which modality was expressed in the language led to the increased use of modal verbs, most of which had been present in the Germanic languages for a considerable period. At their heart lie the preterite present verbs, as discussed above. The forms found for these verbs in Middle Scots are (King 1997: 179): *can—couth; may—micht; sall—suld; will—wald; mot* (no past form realized; equivalent in terms of meaning to Modern English *must*). These forms are descended from Old English; a further Scots modal, *maun*, without a past tense, derives from Old Norse and is found only in Scots and Northern English dialects. These verbs take a main verb without a *tae/til* infinitive marker.

The Modern Scots period has seen, practically simultaneously, both some degree of movement towards the English position in form while, at the same time, a degree of change in relation to both use and meaning. *Sall/suld* is essentially moribund, except in some literary work influenced by Middle Scots writing. The sole survival is *I'se*, implying a range of meanings from *I will* to *I must*. This remains current in some traditional dialects, although I have only heard it from speakers who were born in the 1940s at the latest (Millar 2018: 156). *Maun* may be more common, although it is difficult to tell at times whether its use is at least partly confined to stylized usage and fossilized phrases, such as *man maun dree his weird* 'you must accept/suffer your fate'.

Must is very much a part of both Scots and Scottish Standard English usage but may be more narrow in semantic application than is the case with most varieties of English. *Hiv tae/have to* appears to be preferred in other contexts in rather greater numbers than is normal elsewhere. *Mey* (and also Scottish Standard English *may*) do occur, but do not generally have the demands on usage applied prescriptively in England, the United States and elsewhere in relation to requesting permission. Nor do Scots or Scottish Standard English generally use *shall*, in particular as a first person expression of future/possibility/obligation. This distinction is maintained with *should*. This is a distinction of long standing. Beal (1997: 116) provides the following 'joke' (probably already hackneyed by that

time) given by Sir John Sinclair in his work on Scotticisms (Sinclair 1782: 73–4):

As an instance of the different manner in which the Scots and English use *shall* and *will* in the first person singular, a story is told of a Scotchman who, having fallen into a river in England had almost perished in it, in consequence of his calling out, *I will* for *I shall be drowned*, the spectators having for some time hesitated, whether they should venture their own lives for the safety of one, who, as they were led to imagine, was determined to make away with himself.

My own impression is that the non-Scottish use of *shall* and *should* does have some currency in Scotland today, although the ‘rules’ underlying its use are not necessarily fully understood by all users (Millar 2018).⁷

6.5.2.1 Double modals

A feature of many—not all—Scots dialects are *double modals*. It is quite natural for me to say *I’ll can do it tomorrow/Ah’ll can dae it the morn* ‘I’ll be able to do it tomorrow’ without considering myself to be in any way working against the natural rules of English (or Scots, for that matter), although strikingly I would not be likely to write these constructions without making a conscious decision to do so. I would be very unlikely to go beyond *A’d cuid see him the morn/I’d could see him tomorrow* ‘I’d be able to see him tomorrow’, but there is considerable evidence that many users of this type of construction will find other, much less common, double modals at least ‘grammatical’, albeit ‘unusual’ or ‘uncomfortable’ (Bour 2015 and 2022).

There is something of an historical puzzle about these usages, however. Double modal constructions were found occasionally throughout the Middle English period, only becoming moribund in the course of the sixteenth century. Visser (1973: 2, 404, as cited in Beal 1997: 368) suggests that the Scots usage is the primary continuation of this pattern. It is possible to build a grand narrative from this, suggesting that the double modal construction was

exported from Central and Southern Scotland to Ulster, from whence it passed through the Ulster Scots diaspora to the Appalachian dialects of the United States.

As Beal (1997: 368) points out, however, there are problems with this narrative. There is, for instance, no mention of double modals as Scotticisms in the work of eighteenth-century commentators; they are not present in the work of Burns or Scott either. Nor are the double modal patterns of use identical across the regions which possess the construction; this is particularly the case when we compare Appalachian usage with that of Scotland and Ulster (see Nagle 1994 and Fennell and Butters 1996 for further discussion). It is quite possible, in fact, that we have here again an example of *drift*. There is an innate propensity for a range of inter-related varieties to produce double modal constructions. Only some of them do so, however. Sometimes these 'outcrops' are inter-connected. We should not assume that they are, however. It is quite possible that the double modal is a relatively recent innovation, probably dating from the late eighteenth or nineteenth centuries in all locations.

6.6 Changes in expressing aspect

The expression of verb aspect has changed considerably from the Old English period to both contemporary English and contemporary Scots. Although most of these changes are shared between the two languages, how they are expressed on occasion differs.

6.6.1 Present participle and the development of verbal expression of progressive aspect

In present-day English the present participle (*the **running** man*) and the verbal noun (*all this depended upon the good **running** of the bus timetable*) are not distinguished orthographically (or, indeed, normally in speech). Some speakers would use /ŋ/ solely in these

contexts, while most speakers vary between /n/ and /ŋ/ (it is my impression, in fact, that the /n/ variant is more common among Scottish speakers, except in the most careful speech, or in the speech of some members of the upper middle classes, than /ŋ/ ever is). In Old English, however, the present participle and the verbal noun were discrete, the former generally being realized as *-end*, the latter by *-i/ung*.

This distinction was maintained longer in Scots, with the present participle being *-and* (apparently derived from Old Norse rather than Old English, although obviously cognate) and the verbal noun *-ing*. As King (1997: 180) points out, these forms had fallen together during the Middle Scots period, the <d> being lost in speech for *-and* and an /n/ variant developing for the verbal noun. From an early period, therefore, a similar state of affairs existed with most Scots varieties as was and is the case with English, with essentially the same pronunciation being found (at /n/ on this occasion) for both contexts. Some dialects—notably those of the South-West of Scotland and Caithness—maintain some distinction between the two, however. Its presence at both ends of the Scottish mainland suggests that this distinction has gradually retreated before innovative usage issuing from the centre (for a discussion of similar developments with lexis, see Millar 1999).

6.6.1.1 *be* + *and/in* progressive

The expression of progressive aspect through the employment of *be* and the present participle is a relatively recent development, essentially confined to English and Scots (although my own experience is that a similar construction is spreading in colloquial Norwegian, possibly under the influence of English; it seems particularly prevalent in sports commentary). In a similar manner to what will be discussed for the *dae*-periphrasis below, the construction appears to have become common in English somewhat earlier than in Scots, although the building blocks for this new feature—*be* + present participle—had been collocated much earlier

than when it became associated solely with expression of the progressive aspect (Moessner 1997: 113). It is highly likely (but not necessarily certain) that this represents spread from the former varieties to the latter (see also Meurman-Solin 2002). Unlike English, however, *be + in* is regularly found with stative verbs in Scots, something which is essentially impossible for Standard English. Where Scots can have *A'm thinkin that the morn will be better nor the day*, English would have to have *I think that tomorrow will be better than today*. As Beal (1997: 372–3) points out, this distinction was already present in the eighteenth century. Its use may be due to the influence of Gaelic (it is certainly more prevalent in Highlands and Islands English than it is in mainstream Scots), but this is essentially unprovable.

6.6.2 *dae*-periphrasis

The use of cognates of Scots *dae* 'do' as a light verb in periphrastic constructions was commonplace, as Langer (2001) points out, in a range of West Germanic varieties during the Early Modern period. It is only in Scots and English that the construction was maintained and, indeed, elaborated upon.

Here is not the place to discuss potential origins for this construction in English, both geographical and in relation to the need for such a construction at that particular point in that language's development. What can be said is that, if the Scots and English periphrases have the same origin (a likely, but not absolutely certain, assumption), Scots was significantly slower in taking on the innovation than was English.⁸ It is also true to say, however, that the rules eventually established for the use of the *do*-periphrasis in English (with negatives; for emphasis) were adhered to in Scots as well. Again, it is likely that this was due to spread of the English phenomenon, but this cannot be established entirely (although see Gotthard 2019). Görlach (2002: 105) notes that 'English influence is difficult to assess'. He also notes that

[i]n Older Scots, as in EModE, forms such as *wrait/hes written/dyd wryte/wes writand* were stylistic options for the description of a past event well into the [seventeenth century]. They then come to be distinguished by taking over specific functions, marking off perfective and progressive aspect from the simple past.

6.7 Verb negation

Negation in Scots, at any point in its history, is at heart very similar to that found in English, at any point of its history. In Early Scots, one of the most common ways of expression negation was through the use of *nocht*, normally immediately following, or in close proximity to, a 'bare' verb; the nearest Southern Middle English equivalent was *nat* or *not*, as in *he sagh **nat** that* 'he did not see that', from Chaucer's 'Miller's Tale'. As was the case in English, the full expression of this negator gradually declined in the late medieval and Early Modern periods, although a encliticized form was gradually bound to the *dae*-periphrasis and other verbs, particularly if they served a grammatical rather than lexical function (even if full forms, such as *cannot* remain, particularly with modal verbs; for discussion, see Mazzon 2014).

In Scots, the equivalent *-na* (pronounced in a number of ways in the different modern dialects) followed the same path, but with some differences. Because the spread of the *dae*-periphrasis was somewhat retarded, as we have seen, in comparison with its English *do* equivalent, *-na* with main verbs remained quite common into the Modern Scots period and is a feature which is at least *remembered* as being used within living memory in Northern and Insular dialects in particular. Fossilized usages, such as *A daurna dae that* 'I don't dare do that' are still present, although they may be self-consciously literary (compare also the equivalent English *I daren't do that*). *-na* without periphrasis is still the norm with modal verbs (as with *canna* 'cant' and *wi(l)na* 'won't'); this is also, of course, analogous to the situation in Standard English with *can't* and *won't*. It is my experience that, in northern Shetland dialects at least, an expression

along the lines of *can-no* is also possible in a simple sentence. This may represent a halfway stage between *-na* and non-clitic *no* (which will be discussed shortly). It may demonstrate the fossilized remnants of the original situation just as cliticization took hold as the norm, however. It is equally likely that this essentially represents no more than a phonological distinction from more southerly dialects, however.

The use of *no* (in North-East Scotland, *nae*) as a post-verb negator was commonplace in Scots by at least the beginning of the eighteenth century; Beal (1997: 270) describes the form's being singled out as a Scotticism by eighteenth-century commentators. It is, at least syntactically and quite possibly in terms of form, the descendant of Middle Scots *nocht*, and is generally, although not always, employed in the same positions as English *not*. It normally follows the verb in a clause. With the exception of *dae*, *no—nae* follows the main verb in a periphrasis. In the former context, however, the *-na* clitic is generally preferred. Tulloch (1980: 295, as cited in Beal 1997: 270) suggests that *no—nae* carries more emphasis (at least in the writings of Scott) than does the clitic. This is certainly true on occasion, although more empirical study would need to be undertaken to establish how far this is always the case in everyday speech.

A feature which does distinguish Scots from Standard English is the use of cliticized forms in the latter variety with modal verbs; in particular with *will*. While Standard English prefers *I won't do that*, Scots often has *Ah'll no dae that* (although *Ah wi(l)nna dae that* is also possible). This is a feature which is carried across from Scots into Scottish Standard English as a 'covert Scotticism'. While *won't* is by no means unknown in the latter variety, *I'll not do it* is far more common. This is not a difficult construction for other English speakers to understand, which is probably why it is maintained so comfortably in Scottish Standard English. It is still marked when used outside Scotland, however.

Multiple negation, as Beal (1997: 371–2) points out, has a long history in Scots. My own impression, however, is that it is particularly

prevalent in the urban varieties of the Central Belt and in the working-class speech of other population centres, such as Aberdeen.

6.8 Conclusion

The grammar of Scots is obviously cut from the same cloth as its English equivalent. Both realize—and have realized for centuries—among the most radical departures from the inherited Germanic morphosyntactic norms. Mostly it was the same environmental factors, not least due to linguistic contact and being situated on the same island in a dialect continuum, which encouraged these similar developments. By the time when what is now Scots began to be written, most of the major morphosyntactic changes affecting the typological nature of the descendants of Old English had already passed through all of the successor dialects. The changes are likely to have affected the Scottish dialects before those of southern England.

But this similarity should not be overstressed. Although the morphosyntax of Scots in relation to, for instance, the verb paradigms, is shared with the most northerly English dialects, there are considerable differences between Scots and the varieties of English spoken by many people in the Midlands and South of England. On occasion these differences act as genuine barriers to immediate mutual comprehension.

At times, for instance in the marking of plurality, Scots can appear conservative in comparison to Standard English; at other times, as with the verb paradigms, it appears radical (or at least to be following a strikingly different path of development). On the other hand, first urban and later rural dialects of Scots have shared in many of the vernacular changes which have affected vernacular varieties of English (particularly those first apparent in Ireland).

7

Historical development of Scots lexis

7.1 Introduction

When non-linguists think of language, they tend to think of lexis. This makes sense at a number of levels. Learning lexis is a central experience in learning another language; we will also almost immediately pick up on unusual word choice by someone else (occasionally by ourselves) in our native languages. Inevitably, elements of both forms of recognition lie close to the heart of the historical study of lexical use. Scholarly analysis of these issues goes further, however. It imbeds lexical variation and change in an awareness of how quickly (and often apparently arbitrarily) words can change meaning or, indeed, cease to be used altogether. Bearing all of this in mind, this chapter will follow an essentially four-pronged line of analysis: the origins of Scots lexis, distribution according to semantic field, regional distribution and evidence for lexical attrition in recent years. The chapter will end with a discussion of this last.

7.2 'Native' and borrowed

Given that they are closely related and, on the island on which they were originally spoken, came under similar external influences, it is

unsurprising that both Scots and English borrowed from other languages in similar ways, even if the concentration of influence and how it was realized was (and is) different. Scots inevitably has borrowed more from particular languages.¹ For instance, although the territories in which both languages are spoken had Norse-speaking settlers at particular times, Norse ceased being spoken in northern England by, at the very latest, the twelfth century, Norn was spoken in Orkney and Shetland into the eighteenth century. The connections between these archipelagos and Scandinavia are still remembered (and occasionally perpetuated). It would be very surprising to hear that similar ties were still present between Denmark and, say, Yorkshire. By the same token, the ways in which French was brought into Scotland were in many ways different from the means by which the language was introduced into England, and by whom. Is it possible that these differences affected what lexis was borrowed and when?

As is also the case with Standard English, a large part of Scots lexis is native (it is difficult to say what portion of the complete lexical corpus this represents, since borrowings from French may predominate in pure numbers, but native words are likely to be used more frequently), in the sense that it descends from the *wordhord* of the Germanic varieties carried across to the Island of Britain in the post-Roman period. Most of the everyday vocabulary found in Scots—including function words like *dae/dee/dö* ‘do’—come from this source. When a Scots dictionary leaves out certain words—like *think*—because they are ‘English’, this misses the point (although it does make sense in terms of the saving of space—readers will rarely look up a word they know, or *think* they know). There has been practically no borrowing from Scots to English, or vice versa (except in relatively modern times, as we will see). Instead, we see a large part of the vocabulary of both languages as a joint possession (as is, to a somewhat lesser extent, the case between Scots, English, Dutch, and German). This shared ownership is not confined to words which survive and are common. Comparatively rare words which are now obsolete demonstrate the same phenomenon. A good example

of this is *infangthief*, a legal term which is defined by the *Dictionary of the Scots Language* as '[t]he right of the lord of a manor to take and try one committing a theft within his property. Used only in legal documents as one of the rights pertaining to the lord of the manor'. As both this dictionary and the *Oxford English Dictionary* demonstrate, this word ceased to be used (except in historical commentary and analysis) in the course of the seventeenth century, primarily, we can assume, because the social relationships underlying the word were essentially moribund by that point. Yet its presence within both Scots and English was long and focussed.

7.2.1 'Native' lexis

Old English was not entirely free of external lexical input. Almost inevitably a considerable number of Latin words had been borrowed while the linguistic ancestors of later Old English speakers were still living in Continental Europe. These include *wine*, measures such as *pint* and *pund* 'pound' (in general, words beginning in /p/, or /pf/ in German, are not native to the Germanic languages), along with a considerable number of other, often everyday, words. At least one word, realized in Scots as *kirk* 'church', eventually derives from Greek (although the Scots word was borrowed into Northern English dialects from the Norse outcome of the Greek word, rather than the English equivalent *church*). Latin words were also borrowed on Britain, whether via Christianity or through contact with British speakers. At least according to traditional analyses, relatively few British words were borrowed into English; most of these are concerned with the topography of the south-west of England (such as *coombe* 'valley') and do not concern us here. There would, however, have been some contact between English and British in southern Scotland during the early Middle Ages, a point to which we will return. The word *bannock* '(particularly unleavened) bread' is certainly of Celtic origin (and probably of p-Celtic origin) but is presently used most in Scotland; this may represent a borrowing

from British into the northern dialects of Old English. It is entirely possible, however, that the word has retreated from a more general Old English distribution. Finally, many Latin words came into English under the aegis of Christianity. Some of these are related, inevitably, to religious practice and thought, including *altar* and *monk*. The hegemonic Presbyterianism of Scotland since the late sixteenth century has meant that many of these words have become historical. Alternatively, they may have become highly specialized, perhaps even essentially representing a form of argot. For instance, *bishop* < Latin *episcopus*, continues to be used by Church of Scotland student ministers to refer to the minister of the parish, as well as their supervisor. It could be seen, in the Presbyterian context, as quite 'racy'.

Modern Scots also exhibits a range of Old English words which do not survive in English. Probably commented upon most is *yett* 'gate, particularly to a single house', which turns up in the evocative *Yetts o Muckhart* in Clackmannanshire, previously discussed in Chapter [3](#). English *gate* derives from Old Norse. This retention is of some importance in terms of the typology of borrowing for Scots, since it runs against usage in Northern English dialects.

7.2.2 Non-native vocabulary

The range of influences from other languages through which Scots has passed is well covered in the literature (see, for instance, Macafee 1997a for a survey and analysis). These will be dealt with in depth in relation to each external influence in this chapter. But while reference will be made to this scholarship throughout, concentration on new, complementary, research will be given, intended to present a sense of what lexical resources can tell us about the nature of the borrowing process. In order to do so, I have 'mined' parts of the second edition of the *Concise Scots Dictionary*. Headwords beginning with <a>, <m>, and <s> were analysed in terms of particular origins for words. The three sections were chosen because the

number of headwords contained in each section was considerable and contained words borrowed from a range of different languages. Unlike other alphabetically selected sections which contain a significant number of sections, such as words with initial <p>, where borrowings would inevitably dominate, the sections chosen were perceived as representative, although no claim was made that external influences were present at the same level consistently across the sample. The sample was not intended to provide a quantitative snapshot of usage. Instead, my intention was to provide an in-depth presentation of usage, date, and provenance, as well as of some of the semantic fields realized for each of the external sources.

Before the analysis begins, however, a number of caveats need to be registered and recognized. Firstly (and most obviously, perhaps), the etymologies provided for words by the editors of the *Concise Scots Dictionary* may not be correct when ascribing the ultimate sources for words. But those involved in assigning word origins are both highly qualified to do so and are not working in a vacuum: for many words, years of scholarly discussion predates the final etymological ascription. Moreover, a sufficient sample has been taken, suggesting that any 'rogue' etymologies will be much outweighed by correct attributions.

Secondly, there is an in-built bias, not normally anything but benign, both in my survey and in the *Concise Scots Dictionary*: as we have already discussed, words shared by Scots and English are given less prominence (or may not be covered at all, if the Scots and English cognates cover essentially the same ground semantically). This means that the number of words of French origin covered in the *Concise Scots Dictionary* is not as large a fraction of Scots lexical use as that represented in the speech or writing of Scots speakers, largely because practically all French words found in Standard English are also present in Scots. This is likely to be particularly the case with the Anglo-Norman words, since they proceed from one essential source. The interesting point is that there *are* a number of words of French origin found in Scots but not in English. Thus I have generally ignored occasions where the etymology of a word is given

in that dictionary as French, when a Middle English conduit is also suggested, preferring instead to focus on words where the borrowing is implied to be directly from a variety of French to Scots (many, but not all, of which are of Central French origin).² Thus the impressive number of French words extracted by this process is only a partial representation of the actual amount of French words in everyday use from an early period.

A similar, but possibly lesser, point can be made for Norse borrowings. Many, perhaps most, of the vocabulary of Norse origin present in Scots in the past and now is shared both with the dialects of the north of England, such as *gait* 'street' and, on occasion, with Standard English, as with *take*, for reasons we have discussed in Chapter 3. Generally this survey will concentrate on apparently independent borrowing from Norse into Scots, such as, probably, *stew* 'dust'. This inevitably means that lexis often found largely (indeed, only) in the dialects of the Northern Isles is often dominant.³

7.2.2.1 Borrowings from French

Let us begin with a number of assumptions in relation to the borrowing of French words into Scots.⁴ The first is in many ways the most difficult to quantify. Because Latin is the ancestor of Modern French (and has also had an influence upon French, particularly but not solely, in the Middle Ages as a high prestige written variety, it is often difficult to distinguish between words (and, occasionally, phrases) borrowed directly from Latin or via its daughters (it is quite possible, in fact, that both sources are present, either as one borrowing 'parcel' or as independent introductions by different people and groups often at different times and in different places). We will discuss these points further in the following. Further information on the routes by which French lexis entered Scots can be found in Chapter 3, Millar (2020) and Macafee (2002).

The second issue relates to the absolute sources by which French lexis entered Scots, as defined by the scholars who provided the etymologies for the *Concise Scots Dictionary*. This issue is potentially problematical, since Anglo-Norman, the variety of French introduced into England in the aftermath of the Norman seizure of power there in 1066–1067, was not greatly different from Central French at the point when the new overseas variety was carried across the English Channel. While it is possible at times to distinguish completely between the two varieties, primarily because of phonological distinctions between the different *langue d'oïl* varieties, this is not always the case.

With a few noteworthy exceptions, the *Concise Scots Dictionary* divides the material derived from French into four categories: *Anglo-Norman*, *Old French*, *Middle French*, and undifferentiated *French*. With the exception of the first category, where evidence for phonology different from Central French makes identification straightforward, this distinction between different stages of the language may not be entirely watertight: stages of a language's development are rarely absolute and may involve quite subjective distinctions based upon subtle criteria. Bearing these caveats in mind, however, the following analysis will make a distinction between Old and Middle French, while also recognizing the potentially artificial nature of some of the distinctions made.

7.2.2.1.1 Anglo-Norman borrowings

With the independent Anglo-Norman borrowings, the first feature to be noted is that many of the words are no longer in use. Some of these ceased being current quite recently, as with *malagrugous*, 'grim, forbidding, gloomy, melancholy', which may only have been used in the nineteenth century (at least in writing), or *streaker*, 'a kind of (hunting) dog', which was employed between the late fourteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some of the reasons for this loss can be inferred from the following discussion.

In terms of semantic field, it is unsurprising that many of these Anglo-Norman borrowings, whether current or not, deal with governmental, legal, or ecclesiastical matters (all three intrinsically connected in the Middle Ages and implicitly linked to the work and needs of a highly privileged elite). These include *mavite*, 'wickedness, treachery', current for what appears to have been a relatively short period of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, but also *arage*, 'feudal services including the carriage of goods, or payment in lieu, due by a tenant to his landlord', current from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries (in other words, until the last of these 'feudal' duties and obligations had passed away). The word was resurrected in the twentieth century, but only in an historical sense.

Very much in common use today, however, is *spulyie*, as a noun, in the first instance, meaning '(an instance of) spoliation, plundering, depredation, devastation; *law* the wrongful taking or theft of movable goods, spoliation as alleged theft, a claim at law for spoliation'. I employed the derived verb as a teenager for the surreptitious night-time 'liberation' of apples (and other fruit) from neighbours' gardens.

Other fields are represented as well, albeit with nowhere near as regular an occurrence pattern. These include words for animals, including *simmer*, in use between the late fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries, referring to, among other things, a packhorse, or *spirling* 'the smelt *Osmerus sperlanus* or, perhaps, other small fish', recorded from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries and from the twentieth century on (gaps of this sort may be rather more a matter of recording than a genuine disappearance; we might term this the 'coelacanth effect'). Words concerned with construction and building maintenance are also present, as with *muirment*, a word which is recorded from the late seventeenth century to the eighteenth, meaning 'stones and rubbish which blocked up the workings of a colliery'. Also connected with labour (although on this occasion in agriculture), is the still current *mashlum* '(flour, bread or baked goods made from) mixed grains or grains and pulses'.

A potentially striking feature of these words is that few have been provided by the *Concise Scots Dictionary* with a record of solely regional distribution (with the exception of *spirling*, cited above, where usage is confined, at least in recent times, to the North-East, Tayside and the West Central dialect area). This is rather unlike the situation with a large part of Scots vocabulary as a whole, which is not evenly spread across the Scots-speaking world. It is, of course, dangerous to argue from lack of evidence. Writing in Scots from the late medieval and early modern periods is inevitably less nuanced in terms of evidence of dialect provenance than is the case with later writings (and, of course, recordings). Given its ultimate origins, a large part of Anglo-Norman vocabulary found in Scots, much of it shared with English and therefore not treated directly with in this context, was probably brought as a package by its users, the 'new aristocracy' and gentry of the late eleventh to twelfth centuries,⁵ as discussed in Chapter 3, rather than borrowed in a piecemeal fashion.

Many of the apparently moribund words are concerned with the military technology of the time, as with *artallzeit* 'provided with artillery', found only in the sixteenth century, the legal structures then employed, such as *severance*, 'a guarantee of safety, a safe-conduct, a truce', current from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, or the courtly finesse of the late medieval and early modern periods, as with *symphony*, 'a musical instrument; (a harmonious sound played on) various musical instruments', current from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries.

Some apparently obsolete words are not, however, derived from these elite contexts. For instance, *aluff*, only recorded in the early sixteenth, is a nautical adverb meaning 'close or closer to the wind', suggesting that at least some of these words were employed in everyday contexts by everyday people, albeit in technical or trade contexts where special knowledge is necessary.

7.2.2.1.2 Old French borrowings

Similar patterns can be found in terms of the borrowing of words defined as being of Old French origin. This term, we can assume, implies origins in any *langue d'oïl* variety, excluding Anglo-Norman, with a considerable bias, in terms of written materials throughout the history of Scots, towards the dialect of the Ile de France and, at its heart, the language of the court in Paris. Dealing with words, in the first instance, which still have some use, we can see that some deal with the law, such as *assoilzie*, current since the fifteenth century, meaning, among other things, 'to acquit of a charge; to find in favour of the defender in the action'. There are a small number of words concerned with warfare, such as *saulye*, 'to assault or attack'. Interestingly, however, this survived until the nineteenth century (having first been recorded in the sixteenth). *Saulye* apparently revived in the twentieth century. As we have already noted, the apparent death and rebirth described in dictionaries may have been caused by lack of evidence, rather than actual 'death'; on this occasion, however, the *Concise Scots Dictionary* describes twentieth century use as 'historical'. This can be taken to imply that those who are using it now do not actually employ the word in their everyday usage.

A striking example of when recent usage is not 'historical' is related to building and residence: *spence*, 'a storeroom, a pantry; an inner apartment of a house, used as a sitting room or a small bedroom'. Recorded from the late thirteenth century (a strikingly early date) to the nineteenth century, the word was recorded as current from the twentieth century on.

The social structure of a household is also represented, as with *scutter*, meaning, among other things, 'a maid of all work, a scullion; a kitchen boy; a servant who carries out the most menial tasks in a kitchen', recorded from the late fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries and again from the twentieth century on, although largely, it can be assumed, with backward-looking reference.

Many Old French borrowings have been employed, as far as we can tell from written records, without a break in the record, however. Most of these do not represent a particular social structure at a particular time. Some of the borrowings are now just as 'of the soil',

beyond words used to describe governmental and legal usage, as are their 'native' equivalents. One of the most commonly employed Scots words (in my experience) is *stoor*, which the *Concise Scots Dictionary* defines, among other things, as '(a cloud or layer of) dust; any fine powdery substance'. It is recorded from the fifteenth century on. Another is *spaul*, referring to the shoulder or shoulder bone of a person or an animal, recorded since the fourteenth century.

While most of the currently used and known words of this class appear to be distributed evenly across Scotland and Ulster, some, such as *scuddler* and *spence*, described above, are only (at least in recent times) found in some parts of the Scots-speaking world. Two interpretations are possible. It may be that these words were only ever used in these areas (although any explanation, or explanations, for why this might be the case is difficult to construct). Alternatively (and perhaps more likely) is the possibility that an originally more widespread usage has retreated into a more circumscribed region or regions (for a discussion of this type of developmental pattern, perceived as part of a series of interlocking changes, see Millar 1999).

7.2.2.1.3 Middle French borrowings

Similar patterns of borrowing and use are apparent with words defined by the *Concise Scots Dictionary* as having been borrowed from Middle French, and therefore borrowed somewhat later than the Old French loanwords described above. The distinction is largely made in relation both to the date at which a word first appeared in the Scots corpus as well as, perhaps more certainly, the phonological evidence for the stage in the development of French evidenced by the earliest extant form found in Scots. With those words no longer current, we can find legal terms, such as *appense*, 'append (a seal) to a document', recorded from the late fifteenth to early eighteenth centuries and *subscribe*, meaning, among other things, 'to sign (a document); to signify assent to (a doctrine, course of action, etc.) by

signing (a document)'. Interestingly, while many of these words were only used in (some parts of) the Early Modern period, *subscribe* continued to be used until the nineteenth century, possibly because the acts it describes were an everyday experience for many.

Words concerned with government (such as *argentar*, 'the office having charge of royal finances'), warfare (*accoutre*, 'to dress, array or equip'; it should be noted that *accoutrements* 'equipment' is still very much a part of everyday use, on this occasion as much in English, perhaps, as Scots) or connected to an elite way of life (such as *muschit*, 'of taffeta or ermine, spotted') are certainly present. Words such as *skivet*, 'a tool used in a forge, probably a spade or shovel', cannot so readily be placed within the context of a high status world, however.

Strikingly, a small number of words in this set appear to have contemporary regional distributions. *Allekay*, a word originally derived from Middle French *alacays*, 'foot soldier', was in use in Scots (without apparent regional distribution) in the sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries, meaning 'footman or lackey'. The word appears to have had an afterlife in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but only in Angus, although the meaning of the word had mutated, referring to 'the best man, the bride-groom's attendant'.

Many of the Middle French borrowings which continue to be known and used in the present day are related to the nature and practice of the law. This means that, as we saw in Chapter 4, they will often be used by people who cannot speak Scots and may not even have a Scottish accent; conversely, many Scots speakers will not know words of this type. They are, in a sense, part of a professional argot; more will be said about this feature later in the chapter). Examples of these legal survivals include *malversation*, 'a corrupt behaviour in a position of trust', current from the sixteenth century on, and *meenit*, found from the end of that century, meaning 'to record proceedings (in a register or record book)'.

In complete contrast, Middle French borrowings, such as *mardle*, originally Middle French *merdaille*, 'a worthless rabble', itself derived from *merde*, appear far less elevated in focus. In the North East of

Scotland, however, this word has been somewhat ameliorated in meaning since the nineteenth century and now refers to 'a large number, a crowd, a heterogenous collection'.

7.2.2.1.4 Borrowings from French (no period given)

A number of words found in the *Concise Scots Dictionary* are defined as being of *French* origin, without any overt dating (although some appear, in terms of attestation, to be of considerable age). Unlike the other French origin words, there is little sense of the social upper echelon in words such as *mixter*, recorded first in the late fifteenth century, meaning 'an act of mixing, blending, a compound, an alloy', or *sybow*, recorded from the late sixteenth century, meaning a spring onion, a scallion or Welsh onion'. In my experience this word was in regular use at least among speakers born in the interwar period.

There are also examples of later 'vernacularization' of French words, such as *swaree* 'an evening "do", with entertainment', which represent a (slightly comic) take on an entirely external usage, espoused first by the upper middle classes, but soon transferred to the lower middle classes, at which point their pretentious (and not particularly 'correct' pronunciations) rendered the usage open to ridicule.

7.2.2.1.5 Discussion

Traditionally (see, for instance, Millar 2012a), scholars have schematized the Anglo-Norman borrowings into Scots as deriving from an earlier period than their Central French equivalents. With the latter, the level of divergence between the amount and kind of Central French lexis which came into Scots in comparison to English was explained as being due to the different relationships speakers of the two languages had with France in the later medieval and early modern periods. Most of this remains a reasonable interpretation of

the evidence. There appears to be some evidence, however, that Central French borrowings appear in the written record as early as many Anglo-Norman ones. The distinction between the two postulated eras of borrowing seems to be one of volume of material taken from one source or another, rather than absolutely discrete processes of borrowing.

7.2.2.2 Latin and other classical languages

Scotland had, until well into the twentieth century, a strong tradition of studying the Classics, fostered both by its four ancient universities and also legal and medical lexical traditions, which perpetuate the use of Latin words and phrases (although not necessarily actual Latin itself) in particular.⁶ The Latin tradition had deep roots within the history of Scotland and its languages, even if little is now left except for a few mottos and much legal terminology.

In the late medieval and early modern periods, Latin had a considerably higher status (and level of penetration) than the vernaculars throughout Western Christendom, including, of course, Scotland. In this last case, users of a number of competing written vernaculars from particular social backgrounds wished to employ Latin (and sometimes Greek, such as *lagamachie* 'voluble, endless') lexis as a sign, perhaps, of social aspirations or as part of a professional argot, distancing those who were not part of a particular 'club'. It was the language of the Church and the Law (particularly pertinent because Scots Law has more of a 'flavour' of Roman Law than does the Common Law of England).⁷ Inevitably, therefore, a considerable number of Latin words (and occasionally phrases) have been incorporated into Scots at one time or another.

Many of these Latin borrowings are no longer active in the language. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, these are largely connected to explicitly legal use, as with *actitate*, 'obligated (in official documents)', recorded only in the sixteenth century. Others, such as *subscribent*, 'a signatory, a subscriber', recorded in the seventeenth

and early eighteenth centuries, while not necessarily confined to legal contexts, are likely to have been most commonly used there. Closely related, of course, albeit inevitably referring to structures moribund from 1707 to 1999, are words concerned with the process of government, such as *secretary*, 'the royal secretariat, the office presided over by the royal secretary', recorded in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. *Ambaxitour*, referring to an ambassador, occurring for basically the same time period, forms part of the same field.

The Church is also well represented. Some of the borrowings involved are connected ecclesiastical administration before the Protestant Reformation, such as *salvatrice*, referring to the Virgin Mary as a 'female saviour', are only found in the early sixteenth century and appear to form part of the *aureate diction* central to literary life at the time, a point discussed and illustrated in Chapter [3](#). Other examples of this tradition include *matutine*, 'of the morning' and *mellifluat* 'honeyed, mellifluous', both found only on the cusp between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a period when most critics would consider literature in Scots to have reached its creative (and lexically experimental) apogee. Related to the high life at least aspired to by the use of aureate diction are terms related to music, such as *sister*, 'a musical instrument, perhaps stringed and played with a plectrum or quill', found only in the sixteenth century. The fact that we no longer know what kind of instrument is referred to may tell us something about the intensity of creation found in the contexts of the upper echelons of Scottish society during this period as well as the political chaos which followed. That the word appears to have its origin in Latin *cithara* does not necessarily help identification.

Not all Latin borrowings apparently now moribund in Scots have social associations of this sort. For example, *sowp*, 'to tire, weary, become exhausted, to become dejected', evidenced from the late fifteenth to the early seventeenth centuries, refers to an experience common to all humans (indeed, all animals). *Mertick*, referring to the pine marten and its fur, also appears to provide some evidence for Latin being employed to describe everyday existence (or at least, on

this occasion, an elite activity—hunting—which demanded the presence of non-elite speakers who supplied labour and useful skill sets). Interestingly, this word was, according to the *Concise Scots Dictionary*, in use not only during the early modern ‘heyday’ of literary Scots, but rather from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, including a considerable period after the dialectalization of the language. This survival was encouraged, no doubt, by the word’s association with a tangible being considered to have a monetary value, rather than representing an abstract concept.

It is unsurprising that a great part of the Latin words in Scots which have survived to the present day are directly connected to the practice of law. This includes *sist*, meaning, among other things, ‘to stop, stay or halt (a legal procedure) by judicial decree’, or *suspensive*, ‘capable of causing or liable to cause a postponement of a legal process’. The Law, as we discussed in Chapter 4, was one of the primary means by which Scottish practice was permitted to remain separate from English norms following the Union of 1707. Borrowing in these contexts goes as far as direct use of phrases, as with *mortis causa*, ‘by reason of the death of the grantor’, recorded since the late nineteenth century (although it would be surprising if the phrase had not been used orally long before this). There are also a number of words or phrases which, while not confined to legal use only, are likely to be used most in those contexts. A striking example of this is *agname*, ‘a byname or nickname’, recorded from the seventeenth century on. The survival of this word is particularly interesting, because the *nōmen* ‘name’ element in Latin *agnomen* has been substituted with native *name*, possibly because the two words sound and look similar (and, indeed, have a common Indo-European origin). The term’s ongoing use may also have been encouraged by the casual regard with which Scottish people have treated their family names (the tradition of the *tee-name*, the extra name taken by people in fishing communities in particular because of the number of people in the community holding your family name and, often, your given name, is primary evidence for this). As was the case in our discussion of legal words of a French origin, the extent to which words like *agname* can be interpreted as active

usage among the large part of the Scottish population is low; whether most of the people who use these words could now be considered Scots speakers is also an issue.

We saw previously that a number of moribund Latin borrowings into Scots were connected to the medieval Church; a number of current borrowings of words of Latin origin into Scots are related to denominational organization within Protestant churches, such as *manse*, normally associated with a house provided by a congregation for their parish minister. The word is also used at the University of Aberdeen for buildings which historically were the official residences of regius professors, but now employed as office space and, to a degree, teaching accommodation. *Sederunt*, defined as the 'the minutes of deliberative bodies, used to introduce the list of those present at a meeting', is, in my experience, still prevalent, particularly in its use in relation to meetings of the Kirk Session, the governing body of a congregation in the Presbyterian tradition, made up of minister and elders, lay officers, responsible (largely in the past) for parish discipline and acting as a conduit of views and needs from parishioners to the Session and the Minister. Very occasionally these words are only used in particular regions. An example of this is *missionar*, 'an itinerant evangelist preacher, a member of a non-Presbyterian dissenting church', current only since the nineteenth century, presently only found in the North-East of Scotland, Tayside, and Ulster, a distribution which might imply an earlier, more extensive usage, but is as likely to be due to the presence of evangelical traditions, such as Methodism, not otherwise commonplace in regions where Scots is spoken, in northern Scotland associated with the fishing community and present in Ireland due to the local mixture of Protestant traditions originating from a range of geographical sources among the immigrants from the Island of Britain in the Early Modern period.

Some words connected to education, such as *magister*, 'a teacher or lecturer', are now essentially used only in historical contexts. More popular Latin words in this field include *stendie*, a stroke of the *tawse*, the leather belt used for punishment in Scottish schools until the 1980s, apparently derived from *extende (manum)*, 'hold out your

hand(s)'. The word is only recorded in the East Central dialect area, suggesting an origin in specific schools in that region.

Further examples of a more popular use of originally Latin words and phrases can be found in *superannuate*, meaning 'mentally deranged, senile, simplified', only found (at least at present) in the East Central dialects and in the Border regions. It may originally have been a technical term, but has long been used primarily as an insult.

7.2.2.3 Other Romance languages

Other Romance languages have provided lexis to Scots, apparently independently from English. Most striking, perhaps, is *stookie*, often used to refer to a plaster cast used to immobilize a broken bone to allow the shards to 'knit', derived from Italian *stucco* 'plaster, generally painted on to external walls to protect the underlying materials and also provide decoration and colour'. An earlier borrowing, which is no longer current, is *scope* 'a mark for shooting at; an end, aim, goal', which was probably derived in the first instance from Italian, rather than directly from Greek.

7.2.2.4 Borrowings from the North Germanic languages

Besides French, the other single most important external contributor to the lexis of the Scots language is Norse, used here to refer to the North Germanic languages, no matter the date.⁸ Some of the words stem directly from the Viking Norse spoken in the north of England in the early medieval period (as well as in the Norse language colonies in the Atlantic Archipelago (witness the Norse borrowing *saucht*, 'peace, quiet', where the retention of /x/ suggests an early borrowing: Norse lost this sound before it became fully literate in the twelfth century). Other borrowings derive from the North Germanic varieties spoken until the Early Modern era in what is now Scotland;

in particular in Shetland, Orkney, and (to an extent) Caithness. The precise origins of words from this contact zone are difficult to trace because the corpus of Norn which has survived in either archipelago is small. There may also be some words which derive from later trade of various types between Scots speakers and North Germanic speakers in the middle ages and later; it would be reasonable to expect this to be largely concentrated on the East Coast.

Unlike French and Latin, the *Concise Scots Dictionary* sample reveals very few words of Norse origin which have now been entirely discarded (although many current words may not be as regularly used as was once have the case). It could be argued from this that what we have here is evidence for long-term nativization of everyday vocabulary.

Although some of these obsolete words, such as *min*, meaning 'lesser', often found in the expression *mare or min*, referring to both powerful and lesser in a country (among other contexts), have the same late medieval or early modern concentration in dating as was the case with Latin or French moribund borrowings, others, such as *stell*, 'a place in a river or estuary where nets were set up to catch salmon', have a much later end point. It is quite possible that this loss is actually connected to changes in occupational technology or practice (*stell*, in fact, has an early, thirteenth century, attestation, possibly because it refers to property rights and would regularly have been used in charters and other legal documents).

Some obsolete terms relate solely to the Northern Isles. Interestingly, most of these are legal in nature, possibly because some of the lexical items, such as *samyng*, referring to conveyancing of property rights, are connected to a period, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where there was conflict between traditional *udal* law and Scots law over who owned what (see Jones 2012). Some words, such as *arff* 'inheritance, a court held for the division of property among heirs', continued in use well into the nineteenth century, however.

The semantic fields covered by the surviving Scots borrowings from Norse are rather more diverse, socially or otherwise, than was the case with Latin and French (in the following I will first discuss

borrowings found in a range of dialects; I will then provide an analysis of words peculiar to the Northern Isles).

Unsurprisingly, some of the lexical items involved refer to farming and life on the land. These include *ammal*, found in Shetland, Orkney, and the North, referring to the swingle-tree of a plough, or *struie*, found across the North, 'to sweep threshed grain'. The animal life on the farm is also represented, as with *mull*, which means, among other things, 'the mouth or muzzle of an animal', presently found down the east coast from Shetland to the East Central dialect region.

Equally unsurprisingly, fishing and the sea are also well represented. Words found often relate to the technology of fishing, such as *sucken* 'a small drag or grapnet, especially one used by fishermen in searching for lost lines', found in Shetland and the North East, and the fish themselves, such as *maasgum*, the angler- or monkfish, found in the Northern Isles, the North and the North-East. Interestingly, the *Concise Scots Dictionary* puts forwards an entirely Norn etymology (there is no suggestion of an early, Viking Norse, origin for the word, possibly independent of the borrowing of the same form into the Insular dialects). This suggests, as is likely to be the case on a number of occasions in relation to this source, a relatively recent movement of North Germanic vocabulary from Orkney and Shetland along the fishing and trade routes. Other marine fauna can also be represented by words of Norse origin, as can be seen with *scarf* for the cormorant, found within the long-standing and highly interactive Shetland, Orkney, North and North-East seaborne connection, but also recorded in Ulster. Weather terminology is also often Norse in origin, as with *mooth*, 'oppressively close and humid', or *swither*, 'to be very hot, swelter', found in Shetland, the North-East and the South-West.

Norse borrowings can also be used to describe people and their characters, as with *scauld*, meaning 'a vituperative person' which, rather attractively, derives from Old Norse *skáld* 'poet', apparently used throughout Scotland and *sugg*, 'a fat, easy-going person', found in Orkney, the North-East, and Tayside. Character traits and qualities

are also well represented, including the common word *mense*, referring to qualities such as dignity, moderation, and courtesy.

At least according to this sample (although there is no reason to suspect that the corpus as a whole would provide anything that would be at odds with what has been analysed), what is strikingly different between the sizeable French and Latin influence upon Scots and the Norse borrowings is that the latter involves central words like the adverb *aye* 'always', as well as common verbs such as the modal *maun*, roughly equivalent to English *must* in meaning (as discussed in Chapter [6](#)); Romance and Latin borrowings tend to be represented by important words which do not have an integral, often grammatical, necessity to be used.

Naturally, similar patterns are evinced in the lexical borrowing from North Germanic found primarily in the Northern Isles, where, as we have already noted, Norse dialects were spoken well into the Modern era, side-by-side for several centuries with Scots. For many people bilingualism would have been the norm. Both arable and stock-rearing farming is well represented for these regions in terms of borrowings. Words for the farming process itself, such as *swarve* 'turn over hay', found in Shetland, or *stiggle*, 'a poor, thin straw or stalk of grain', found in Orkney, or the products of that occupation, as in the Orcadian word *save*, 'heather shoots used in brewing'. Sheep-rearing is particularly well-represented, as with *moorit*, 'reddish-brown, describing one of the traditional colours of a Shetland sheep or its wool', found in both Shetland and Orkney, and *aithken*, 'a mark of ownership (on a sheep)', recorded in Orkney.

Given the situation of the two archipelagos, it is no surprise that many words connected to the sea and the fishing industry are unique Norse borrowings. Lexical items referring to fish species and for stages in a species' maturity process, are well represented, as with *marool*, referring to the angler- or monkfish', recorded for Shetland (Millar, Barras, and Bonnici (2014) demonstrate that this fish, because of its striking looks, has several different names along the Scottish coast). The names of other coastal flora and fauna are also represented, as with the Shetland word *marlik*, referring to a particular species of seaweed. The topography of the coast and sea

is also well represented with Norse borrowings, as words like *minn* 'a bay, an inlet of the sea', or *mar*, referring to the open sea, both native to Shetland, demonstrate.

The open air nature of both farming and fishing inevitably implies that, in the dialects of Orkney and Shetland, weather vocabulary should be common and particularly precise in reference. Equally inevitably, many of these terms will be of Norse origin, as with *sweevil*, found in both Orkney and Shetland, meaning 'a gust of wind, a short sharp gale', and Shetland *moorcavie*, 'a blinding snowstorm', the latter with direct witness in the extant ancestral Norn form *murkan*.

A large part of the Norse borrowings peculiar to the Insular Scots dialects cannot be categorized in these ways, however. In fact, most of them, such as *misglim*, found in both archipelagos, meaning 'to neglect, forget; to ill-treat' appear central vocabulary items, as do *mod*, peculiar to Shetland, referring to 'a quantity of small objects or creatures' and *awebound*, 'a check, curb, a restraint, a deterrent', again only found in the northern archipelago. Sometimes—and demonstrating the local nature of the contact—Norse origin vocabulary can also be imbued with a degree of earthiness, as with *aggle*, common to Orkney and Shetland, meaning 'to dirty, make a mess'.

7.2.2.5 Dutch and Low German

Given, as covered in Chapter 3, the length and complexity of contact between speakers of Dutch and Low German (distinct but similar languages) and Scots, it is unsurprising that lexis from these sources should be present in Scots.⁹ What is striking, however, are the wide range of semantic fields which are represented by these loans.

What these semantic fields might involve is often predictable, given the types of contact which occurred between speakers of the Scots, Dutch, and Low German languages. Many of the borrowings are concerned with the fishing trade, such as the Shetland word *shot*, 'the stern compartment in a rowing boat used to hold the

catch'. Words concerned with fish and their levels of maturity are also commonplace, as with *mattie* 'a young maiden herring with the roe not fully developed', as are borrowings concerned with the flora and fauna of the sea, such as *mallimoke*, referring to a fulmar, found along the eastern coast of Scotland from Shetland to the East Central dialect area.

Given the importance speakers of Dutch and Low German had in developing the Scottish economy from the Middle Ages on, with different inputs in different regions at different times, from long-term settlement of highly skilled speakers of Dutch in urban areas to the use of Low German as a lingua franca in trade around the North and Baltic Seas, it is unsurprising that words concerned with trade should turn up. This appears to be particularly the case with weights and measures, as with *anker*, 'a liquid or dry measure, 8½ [imperial] gallons (approx.[imately] 38 litres)', found in Shetland, Orkney, and the Northern dialects, as well as for coinage (the two categories were not, of course, originally discrete), such as *stuir*, 'a penny, originally a small Dutch coin', now found in Shetland.

New technologies for building or maintenance are also represented, as with *slump*, referring, among other things, to a rough estimate for building. Trades and their learning process are present, as with the now moribund *maisterstik*, 'the piece of work produced by a craftsman to prove himself qualified for acceptance as a [master]'.

Clothing is also part of the Dutch and Low German borrowing package. *Spaing*, meaning, among other things, 'a buckle, a clasp, a metal plate', recorded in Shetland, describing what must have been at one time have represented new technology. Farming is not ignored, however, suggesting that the idea that borrowing took place solely in coastal regions is wide of the mark. *Scribble* 'to card or tease wool mechanically' again could be taken as representing the borrowing of the word along with the technology.

It must be recognized, however, that, as was the case with borrowings from North Germanic mentioned above, most borrowings from Dutch and Low German into Scots are part of a miscellany of words connected to everyday experiences and states, such as *smuir*,

'suffocate, smother, crush to death', or *strule*, 'a stream or steady trickle of liquid', derived from Middle Dutch *struylēn* 'to urinate'. Interestingly, two of the most common Low German or Dutch borrowings are part of this set—*skelf*, referring to a splinter, and *skink*, referring to soup 'originally made from a shin of beef'. Ironically, the word is almost wholly known now through the milky smoked fish soup, with a ham base, *Cullen Skink*. It should be noted, however, that this set of sources, while noteworthy, has not affected central, often functional, vocabulary in the way Norse has done. There is no evidence for the borrowing of 'grammatical' lexical material from Dutch and Low German sources, as is the case with Norse lexis.

7.2.2.6 Gaelic

We discussed in Chapter [3](#) the historical and contemporary relationship between speakers of Scots and the other national vernacular, Gaelic.¹⁰ Because of the long-standing relationships between speakers of the two national vernaculars, we might assume that Gaelic lexis would be at least as prevalent in Scots as words of French origin are. From the evidence in our sample, however, that does not seem to be the case, primarily, we think, for sociolinguistic reasons. Such an analysis does not mean that the number of words borrowed into Scots from Gaelic is minimal, however.

Most Gaelic borrowings into Scots found in our sample refer to a range of everyday beings, ideas and views. They include *snatchak*, recorded in the North and North-East, meaning 'a small quantity of alcohol, a dram', or *ablach*, 'a contemptible person, lacking will or intellect', found in the North-East, Tayside, and the Highlands and Islands. From a personal point of view, *sonsy* reminds me of being present when older members of my family first saw a baby and declared it healthy (connected, I assume, with the child's being considered to have sufficient body fat). The adjective is derived from the Gaelic word *sonas* 'good luck, prosperity'.

Inevitably, Gaelic borrowings related to agriculture, such as *slug*, associated with the South-West, meaning 'a small temporary hay- or cornstack',¹¹ or *sockan*, 'a one-ply rope of straw, grass or hay used for tying bundles of straw or thatching ricks', found at least at present in Orkney and the West Central dialects, are common. Gaelic-derived words are also used for reared animals. *Mart*, referring to a beast fattened for slaughter, found throughout Scotland and Ulster (in my experience, very common in the farming community) is of Gaelic origin. Another bovine word from this source, on this occasion only found in western and south west Scotland, is *mulloch*, 'a hornless cow'. Body parts of domesticated animals are also present, as with *scroban*, referring to the 'crop of a fowl'. Non-domesticated animals also occasionally have Gaelic-derived names, such as *smagan*, a toad, and *assilag*, the storm petrel, both confined to the Northern dialects.

Fishing is also represented among the lexis borrowed from Gaelic, as with *stay*, found only in the North-East, 'used to mark the position of sunken fishing-lines or crab-traps', or *scattan*, a word for a herring, presently found in the North-East, the Highlands and Islands, and the West Central dialect region. Possibly best known of these words lies outside our sample: *partan* 'crab'. Foodstuffs are also present in the inventory of borrowings from Gaelic, as with *sowans*, 'a dish made from the solid residue of fermented oat husks and fine meals', found throughout Scotland, although for most, I imagine, a memory rather than an everyday meal.

Several Scots words of Gaelic origin found in the sample refer to topography (or geological structures). These include *slock* (or *slug*), referring to a 'narrow pass' between hills, presently used in the North, North-East, Tayside, and, strikingly, the South-West, where Gaelic continued to be spoken for longer than anywhere else outside the Highlands. More commonly used, in particular on the coast, is *machair*, referring to 'a low-lying land, adjacent to the sand of the seashore (used for sheep grazing ...)'.

There are also a number of Gaelic borrowings which deal with cultural or other events and activities which are generally no longer

marked (or are, at most, moribund but remembered). These include *shannok*, 'a bonfire, originally especially at Halloween', recorded in the North-East, Tayside, and the East Central dialect region. Historical ranks and positions are also retained, such as *shennachie*, 'a teller of traditional Gaelic heroic tales; originally a professional reciter of family history and genealogy', a word, which is found, largely through historical fiction, throughout the English-speaking world. Also representative of past relationships between the Gàidhealtachd and the Scots-speaking parts of Scotland is *spreath*, 'cattle stolen in a raid, especially by Highlanders into the Lowlands; cattle taken as booty'.

Without promoting a conspiracy, the evidence for topographical and cultural lexical borrowing might give us a considerable understanding about the relationships between Scots and Gaelic speakers over the last half millennium (or possibly millennium). If we focus on territory beyond the Atlantic Archipelago, which has been colonized and resettled since the European imperialist expansion, such as the United States or Australia, the most common features carried over from the native languages to the now dominant ones refer to the names of places (rivers, hills, passes, and so on) which can be used to mark property boundaries for the new proprietors, often with the understanding that this use of names and terminology would mark the point where the native people would be subjugated or 'invited' to leave. In addition, a sentimentalized, simplified, and sanitized form of the past native culture could also be allowed to continue, often taken on by the settlers as markers of their 'native' status. What marks off these colonial language appropriation patterns and what happened to Scotland is that, essentially, it was the same population which gave and took.

7.3 Semantic fields and change in Scottish lexis

It is often quite difficult to give a sense of the various types of lexis used now and in the past in any language. Equally, it is difficult on occasion to be certain whether a word is still used in a current sense or is now historical. This is particularly the case, perhaps, with languages like Scots, whose corpus, throughout its history, is concentrated on literary use and which, as is the case for all European languages, is limited in its early history to what has survived. This may be particularly the case during the period before the introduction of moveable type technology to Scotland in the sixteenth century, where every scholar is obliged to rely on manuscript evidence, where uniformity in expression is far from guaranteed.

Since English became the hegemonic language of literacy in Scotland in the seventeenth century, moreover, only patchy recording of lexical knowledge and, in particular, lexical use was essentially inevitable. Again, the record is skewed towards the literary, even if, as we touched upon in Chapter 4, writers like Sir Walter Scott, when they use Scots in dialogue, demonstrate a highly developed 'ear' for accuracy and fidelity to the vernacular they are representing: most had Scots as their spoken variety, of course. With the exception of Jamieson's *Dictionary* (1808), Scots lexis was first treated in a scholarly manner in the twentieth century. While these efforts to record and analyse use distribution and knowledge are remarkable, we are again faced with a situation where the record is partial and is skewed towards literary use.

Having said all this, however, there are a number of excellent modern resources which give a sense of the diversity of meanings (and connotations) carried by Scots words and how this has changed over time. The primary product of such scholarship is the *Scots Thesaurus* (Macleod 1990), based primarily (but not solely) on the first edition of the *Concise Scots Dictionary*. The present book does not possess enough space to provide an analysis (indeed a true sense) of the diversity of lexical material found within this work (such an analysis, albeit of only two major semantic fields, can be found in Millar, Barras, and Bonnici 2014). In the next few paragraphs, however, examples of words within specific semantic

fields (and their historical use) will be presented. These semantic fields have been chosen primarily because of the desire for contrast between often different meanings-sets, associated with emotions, abstract concepts, employment or concrete concepts.

If we consider words found within the field **Stupidity** (*Scots Thesaurus* 15.2.4), we can find considerable evidence for ongoing use of words and phrases, as well as, often, the histories of their use. Some of these, like *eediot* 'an idiot', appear to be general in the Scots-speaking world, buoyed up by similarity to its English cognate and its regular occurrence in Irish English. On the other hand, *bawbart*, 'a dull or sluggish person', is only recorded in the sixteenth century (as analysed in the second edition of the *Concise Scots Dictionary*); interestingly, the word appears to be of French origin (although the sound similarity with the unrelated *baw* 'testicle' may also have encouraged its use).

Also striking are those words which have a scattered occurrence at the time when the *Scottish National Dictionary* (upon which the *Concise Scots Dictionary* was primarily based) was being compiled (1931–76). With some of these it is entirely possible to explain this distribution. *Oanshach* 'a foolish person' is only found, according to the *Scots Thesaurus*, in the North-East and in Argyllshire. As the word itself is a borrowing from Gaelic. It is unsurprising that it should be found, in Scots, at the edge of the Gàidhealtachd.

On other occasions, however, explanations of this sort are not really possible. *Yaup*, with the meaning 'a fool, oaf, yokel' is recorded only in Angus, Fife, and the Southern dialects. Given the differences in geographical but also cultural terms, between these regions, different in dialect and in occupational traditions, it would be difficult to argue that there is a particular sociolinguistic factor which binds them together. This type of distribution is particularly striking when the word *now* is employed in the rubric of the *Thesaurus*, suggesting that at one time there was a wider distribution. An apposite example of this from within this semantic field is *menseless*, 'stupid, foolish', *now* found in Banffshire, the East Central dialects and Roxburghshire in the far south of the country. Similar in many ways to this type of distribution are those occasions where *now* is used in reference to

only one location, as with *bumph*, 'a stupid person, a fool', *now* only used in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. I have discussed patterns of this sort in Millar (1999).

Let us look at another, highly contrastive, semantic field, concerned with **Soldiers and other Services Personnel** (*Scots Thesaurus* 12.2). What is striking about this set of words is not that most of the specifically Scots words given are now moribund. Technologies, means and the personnel of warfare have inevitably changed over the last 500 years; we could make similar observations for German or Chinese lexis connected to this field. With Scots, however, this is combined with the fact that, at least since the union of 1707, all military forces and their personnel have been constituted following an essentially English model. In fact, these terms which still considered current in the last quarter of the twentieth century either refer to central roles which have not changed and possibly cannot do so or are specifically Scottish in their denotations, such as *Jock*, a nickname for 'a soldier in one of the Scottish regiments' or *kiltie* 'soldier in a Highland regiment'. Many examples of this type have a mischievous or mocking quality to them (although these epithets are, in my experience, rarely considered offensive by people who are included in the remit of the word). A further point is that, with a few exceptions, none of these words, whether historical or current, has regional distributions. Instead they appear to be found across Scotland: to a large degree (particularly now, but also in the past), the military life is built on uniformity and a common linguistic code,

Elements of this distribution is in marked contrast (except in terms of their distribution across the whole of Scotland) to what is found in the *Scots Thesaurus* for semantic fields associated with the Law, here concentrating on **Family Law** (ST 11.12). While a number of words and phrases in this field are now obsolete, such as *terce* 'the right of a widow to the life-rent of their husband's heritable estate, if no other provision is made', most of these words, such as *consanguinean* 'descended from the same father but not the same mother' are both current and have a long pedigree. Inevitably many (but not all) of both the surviving and the obsolete lexis is of Latin

origin or, indeed, a Latin phrase itself, such as *jus relictæ*, *jus relictī* ‘the share of a deceased spouse’s movable goods to which the surviving wife (*relictæ*) or husband (*relictī*) is entitled’. As suggested elsewhere, it is highly probable that the high level of survival in legal language may represent the use of Scots words and phrases as an occupational argot. Interestingly, one of the obsolete words is *tocher* ‘a marriage portion, *esp[ecially]* a bride’s dowry’. This is one of the few Gaelic words found within this field.

7.4 Distribution of lexical material across space

The Scots section of *The Linguistic Atlas of Scotland*, derived from the *Linguistic Survey of Scotland*, conducted primarily in the 1950s, is a particularly apposite means of tracking the present distribution of specific terms for particular concepts, inanimate objects or beings (bearing in mind the issues of coverage and the highlighting of the study of traditional over innovative dialects which is part of the ideology of dialectology), as discussed in some depth in Millar (2018 and 2022). A book (indeed, several books) could be produced from an analysis of these distributions. In this context, however, one concept—‘Passage between houses’ (I, Map 25)—must suffice. I grew up calling this a *vennel*, a word of French origin. Given that in Oakshaw, one of the oldest settled parts of my hometown, Paisley, is transected and connected by narrow streets and lanes, it is inevitable that *vennel* would be a common word in the area. The *Linguistic Atlas*, however, demonstrates that this word is most used in eastern Scotland. In western Scotland, the word is only common in Glasgow and its environs.

More commonly used in the West Central dialects, as well as in pockets in the more northern parts of eastern Scotland, is *pen(d)*, also of French origin. Upon consulting the *Concise Scots Dictionary*, it becomes apparent that this word refers in particular to an entrance into a lane which is, at least at the entrance, roofed over.

For me, this word refers to the area beyond this roofed lane, but this may be a personal misapprehension.

In pockets of the North East, as well as some of these more widespread words for this concept, *lane* or *lanie* is common. In Shetland, *trance* was regularly realized in some parts of Mainland. Again a French borrowing, the second edition of the *Concise Scots Dictionary* indicates a rather more extensive distribution, with the word being recorded with this meaning along the east coast of mainland Scotland.

Alley (way), common, the *Linguistic Atlas* suggests, in north-eastern England, is not found in Scotland (or, at least, was not recognized by native speakers as being a local word). On the other hand, *entry*, so common in the northern dialects of English, is recorded across both Scotland and Ulster, albeit with a concentration of usage in Ulster, the South-West, and the southern parts of the West Central dialect region.

What are we to make of this distribution? It is not, of course, uncommon in any linguistic setting for different dialects to use different words for similar ideas, beings, and items. What is striking, however, is that, while some words and phrases seem to be peculiar to one region, others are found in pockets across the Scots-speaking world. This may well suggest that, at an earlier time, these words were used more widely. The fact that many of the words cited are of French origin might encourage the conclusion that architectural and planning innovations and standards began in a high status, urban, context.

7.5 Lexical attrition

In Chapter [4](#), we briefly considered the nature of lexical attrition in Modern Scots. In the following section we will concentrate further on the loss of local lexis in the fishing communities of the East Coast of Scotland. These communities are particularly well suited as a test-bed for how local lexis is maintained in use or is essentially lost in

terms of use and, often, knowledge. This is helped by the fact that the fishing settlements are often discrete from their hinterlands, in particular in relation to religious and cultural practice. Changes in the economics of the fishing trade and the ecological wealth of the North Sea have led to considerable decline in the direct connection with the former primary occupation in the last hundred years, however.

In our work in these communities (Millar, Barras, and Bonnici 2014), we were interested in the loss of specifically fishing lexis (including the processing and sale of fish after landing). We were also interested in informants' knowledge of vocabulary related to local flora and fauna, as well as the weather and sea conditions, so vital to the fishing industry and individual fishers. The results of the survey are complex and cannot be fully reproduced here. A number of salient points can be made, however.

In relation to some specifically fishing vocabulary, use (indeed, knowledge) appears to be conditioned by age. *Barkin* was a central process in fishing communities until the advent of generally available artificial fabrics in the post-war period. It involved the cooking up of bark from a range of tropical trees, intended to slow the decomposition of natural fabrics, and the painting of this substance on ropes, lines, nets, and clothing. It had a pungent smell, meaning that it was only made outdoors, in a process in which the whole community was involved. It was remembered, often fondly, by informants over fifty at the time of the survey. Younger informants generally had no knowledge of the process, however, instead considering *barkin* to be another name for extreme mental illness. This type of generational disconnect was common for many words and phrases, along with their underlying conceptual framework. These changes were not confined purely to the lexis of fishing and its environment, moreover.

An apparent bucking of this trend is *farlin*. This industry-specific word was chosen to be surveyed because it is associated with the female input so central to the successful development of the trade. During the annual *herring drave*, the movement of herring shoals around the Atlantic Archipelago and the capture of large numbers of fish by the various fleets demanded the presence at many ports of

highly skilled gutters, who processed the fish so that it could be packaged in a variety of ways. These *gutter lassies* or *gutter quines*, depending on place of origin, were generally unmarried young women, most often members of a fishing community, who travelled independently from their menfolk to a range of centres where their unremitting work was fairly well compensated. Gutting is a dangerous job; it was even more so before the advent of antibiotics; the danger was increased considerably by the fact that the women were piece workers: the more fish they gutted, the higher their wages. Fish were gutted quickly and efficiently before the prepared herring was placed in a barrel or trough, termed the *farlin*.

Our oldest informants knew the word and generally had much to say about it and the gutting life; inevitably this was particularly the case with female informants. Only a few middle-aged informants were aware of the process, probably because the herring fishery began to decline before they had become full contributors to the local fishing industry. To most young people, *farlin* was no more than a collection of syllables. There were exceptions to this lack of knowledge, however. A number of young female informants along the coast knew that the word was concerned with part of the herring gutting process (although few were able to describe exactly what it referred to). Further investigation established that all of these informants worked in the local heritage business. It is likely that, in fact, they had learned this word as part of their job rather than through direct community transfer. *Farlin*, along with a range of other fishing-based words and phrase, had essentially become heritage items.

What was also striking was that younger informants knew considerably fewer of the local words for flora and fauna, as well as weather and sea conditions. It is possible that some of these changes are involved with the decline of fishing: weather, previously a matter of life and death, became a talking point. Less concentration on the local may mean less focus on the place and its animals and plants. When words do survive, as with the terms for 'seagull' found along the coasts, they appear to be associated primarily with the expression of local identity in an increasingly

homogenized environment.¹² It is very likely that attrition of this type is to be found across Scotland and Ulster, in communities of all sorts. It is certainly something which, from my experience, is evident to most older speakers, when they compare the lexical use of their childhood in comparison with the usage of younger people today. Of course this type of commentary is regular in every generation in relation to those following. Nevertheless, an acceptance of such views of lexical change in this context is persuasive.

7.6 Conclusion

Of all the features which mark off Scots from Standard English (and, indeed, most other varieties of English), it is lexical use which is most salient. A separate political, economic, and cultural reality in Scotland in the Early Modern era led to different coinage and borrowing practices. Although much of this autonomy was subsequently lost, the spoken (wherever applicable, written) evidence suggests an ongoing tradition of discrete lexical use, albeit diversified according to region (a reality somewhat masked in the Older Scots period by the ubiquity of written evidence at the very least influenced by the metropolitan variety associated with the court, its officers, the educated and the mercantile classes). Later elite influence of the same type came directly from Standard English.

As is the case for all languages, some lexical items, which may have previously been in common use in Scotland, gradually (sometimes more rapidly) ceased to be used, while other words became more common or were borrowed or coined. But what evidence from the last 250 years suggests, in fact, is that, in the first instance, urbanization has caused a disconnect between rural lexis and the new urban varieties' usage patterns. Secondly, there is considerable evidence from many different places that autochthonous lexis is being lost through the forces of attrition, with colloquial English words and phrases being preferred. Over time, as I have suggested, this may lead (indeed, in my view, is leading) to the

creation of varieties where some Scots features—most notably, perhaps, in terms of pronunciation—are placed within speech norms where the lexis, apart from a few local shibboleths, is barely distinguishable from colloquial English. This is not, of course, a one-way street. Words like *numptie* ‘idiot, fool’ and *mingin* ‘unpleasant smelling; ugly’ have been borrowed into English from Scots in the recent past. By the same token, some dialects—and individuals and groups within a particular dialect area—have maintained local lexis well. The extent to which these features can be maintained, even in the most retentive varieties, is not entirely clear, however.

8

Concluding remarks

Scots is both vibrant and shrinking in terms of native speakers. ‘Pure’ Scots, if it ever existed, has ceased to be used in speech, although it has a strong presence in writing; in particular in creative work. The gap between spoken Scots and written Scots has never been wider. Local vernacular varieties—often, but not always, urban—appear to be moving towards coalescence with colloquial forms of English.

The reasons underlying these final issues are, as this book has demonstrated, essentially sociolinguistic rather than linguistic. There is no structural reason why Scots (in its ‘ideal’ form) should not be treated as having the same relationship with English which Norwegian has with Swedish. The gradual dialectalization of Scots in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, caused by political, religious, and economic changes in the speaker community is the primary cause for the status—and lower than expected speaker numbers—of Scots in Scotland and Ulster today. While the language has more official support now than it has had since the Early Modern period, it is difficult to see how this governmental goodwill can combat centuries of status-dropping activities, carried out in both the private and public spheres.

Having said all this, it is remarkable how well Scots has survived. In another book (Millar 2018: 218–19) I used the idea of *nec tamen consumebatur* ‘and yet it was not consumed’. In its original setting as the image preferred until the 1980s by the Church of Scotland, along with a representation of the Burning Bush, this image

represents the abiding power of God; at another, it refers to the persecution of Presbyterianism in Scotland in the seventeenth century and its eventual triumph. It can also be used in relation to Scots (and, indeed, Gaelic): and yet it was not consumed. Whether it flourishes or not depends on the generation who are now having children. The 'death' of Scots is much heralded but has not happened: yet.

8.1 What needs further research?

The history of the Scots language is probably better illustrated and analysed than many other lesser-used languages. This is probably due to a number of factors. Scots has a considerable, albeit sometimes patchy, corpus. It is a close relative of what is, at least presently, the hegemonic language: many researchers who do not have English as their first language are drawn into research on Scots because of this connection. Moreover, Scots has a well-attested ancestor shared (albeit derived from a somewhat different dialect) with English. Questions of historical background are less of an issue for Scots as they would for most lesser-used languages in, for instance, North America. Finally, the commitment of many scholars to the study of Scots often comes from a commitment to Scotland, no matter their nationality or political position.

A number of issues remain, however, although many of these lacunae may be explicable as being due to lack of evidence. This issue may explain why we know so little about Scots in the period between around 1650 to 1720 or thereabouts. This lack is, of course, due to there being so little explicitly Scots material during the period; this is unfortunate because so much—changes in the verb system, the Scottish Vowel Length Rule, and several other issues—appears to have taken place during this hiatus. To what extent could analysis of ostensibly English material written in Scotland from the period help our understanding?

From a sociolinguistic viewpoint, a history and analysis of the Scots language movement(s) in both Scotland and Ireland would also be most welcome.

In a recent article (Millar 2022) I suggested that there is an absolute need for the recording and analysis of the use and knowledge of Scots lexis across the Scots-speaking world. As Millar, Barras, and Bonnici (2014) demonstrated, even in places where traditional dialect survived well in the post-war era, lexical attrition is increasing in impact. This phenomenon and the loss which underlies these changes will only increase in the next few decades. An early recording of what survives now is imperative.

Scots is in many ways a variety of English. As we have seen, for instance, the morphosyntax of the two varieties are very similar (although not identical). Equally, the phonologies of Scots and English have continued to diverge. The influence of written Standard English can also supply convergence, as can the influence of colloquial English in more informal contexts. What can be said is that the difference in lexis has always been the primary place where mutual intelligibility is most problematical, particularly for English speakers who have limited (or no) exposure to Scots. Yet, as we have seen, it is precisely in terms of lexical distribution that even traditional varieties are leeching parts of their system. There is a danger that Scots will become a little like varieties of English like Scouse, the vernacular of Liverpool, where phonological divergence is coupled to limited lexical distinction. This is the quandary of the dialectalized language.

Endnotes

Chapter 1

1. Perth, on the boundary between the Highlands and Lowlands, while of considerable cultural and historical importance, has a significantly smaller population and has only recently been granted city status. Dunfermline, a place with strong Royal connections, was only granted city status in 2022.

Chapter 2

1. A number of scholars have attempted to reconstruct earlier linguistic states. Some of these attempts are intellectually respectable, as is the case with the various versions of the Nostratic hypothesis (although most historical linguists take at best an agnostic view of the outcome). Others, such as the products of Greenberg's mass comparison methodology, are suspicious as tools (see Millar 2015: 220–7).
2. As an example, Mercian, the language of the West Midlands of England, is very poorly attested, despite Mercia being a kingdom of some importance in the eighth century. The more southern part of the same area was associated with a major flowering of literary production in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, from whose language we extrapolate backwards to reconstruct Mercian. To make matters even more complex, the largest piece of Old Mercian we possess, the English gloss to the *Vespasian Psalter*, was written by a scribe, presumably of West Midlands origin, who was based in Canterbury, at the heart of the Kentish dialect area (Sisam 1956).

Chapter 3

- [1.](#) The general narrative drift of this chapter and [Chapter 4](#) follows that of Millar (2020). Other references will be confined to specific points.
- [2.](#) An excellent Modern treatment of the Scandinavian impact on Scotland can be found in Barrett (2012). The linguistic histories of Orkney and Shetland are strikingly different from the rest of Scotland. The two archipelagos are likely to have begun as Pictish-speaking territories. During the Scandinavian expansion, the dialects of what would later be termed Norn were exported to the islands, eventually becoming the sole language. The history of Norn is intertwined with that of Scots and will be discussed on several occasions in this book (see also Millar 2008).
- [3.](#) Including my own essay of 2012, which overstressed the sociolinguistic side of the language's history.
- [4.](#) In a further complication, Margaret's own linguistic background was also less than straightforward. Because of the bloody politics of the final generations of pre-Conquest England, her early life was spent in Hungary. While her father was English, her mother was a German speaker. On the return of her family to England when the West Saxon royal house was restored, it can be assumed that her English would have been reinforced, although there is some evidence which suggests that the king himself, Edward the Confessor, was Francophone by preference. Certainly his court was heavily Normanized when his will prevailed (major 'native' powerbrokers at times enforced a more English court). For a discussion, see Dunlop (2005) and Keene (2013).

5. Barrow (1980) remains the classic treatment; Barrow (1999) discusses use of the French language in Scotland. A broader treatment of the Norman effects on the 'periphery' of the Atlantic Archipelago can be found in Davies (1990).
6. There may also be evidence for some settlement of English-speakers to the north of the Forth-Clyde line. I am writing this passage in Laurencekirk, a small town in the Howe o the Mearns, about halfway between Dundee and Aberdeen. The *Laurence* part of the name relates to a miracle which took place here in the second half of the eleventh century during a visit by St Margaret. What is less known is that the Laurence referred to is not the great St Lawrence, but rather St Lawrence of Canterbury, one of the group of missionaries who came to England at the end of the sixth century under the leadership of St Augustine of Canterbury. The choice of patron, related to a lesser-known saint, is indicative of the presence of people in some way connected to English church tradition.
7. The classic discussion of the mutual influences between Scots and Gaelic is Ó Baoill (1997).
8. It might be claimed that this argument is too reliant on Gaelic contact explanations to explain the 'peculiarities' of the Northern dialects. But there seems to me to be no need to use this type of an interpretation with, say, the 'palatals' of some North-East varieties, in words like *tyaave* 'struggle in a stoic manner'. Given that these are more common on the north coast of the North-East—furthest away historically from long term and deep contact with Gaelic—and that similar features are found in dialects where such contact is unlikely, dialect internal origins are far more likely.

Chapter 4

1. It is difficult to say whether Knox is actually making a distinction between Scots and English here or not. Any decision on this must be based on how we interpret *or*.
2. I am aware that in presenting the orthographical evidence in this way I may be simplifying somewhat. As Smith (2007 and 2020), among others, has pointed out, Burns could be highly knowing in his use of orthography and the pronunciations underlying it, mixing Scots and English conventions. In other words, it would be unwise to assume that the spellings found represent only Burns' own pronunciation of his 'unalloyed' native dialect. The spelling *benmost*, an unquestionably Scots word (in other words, not one which would be immediately understood by a monolingual English speaker) is not realized as the more genuine *benmaist*.
3. And persists, as can be seen, for instance, in the treatment by the English media and by many English opinion-formers of the arch-Unionist Gordon Brown, British Prime Minister from 2007 to 2010. This treatment might be profitably compared with the ways in which Westminster administrations from 1707 on which have been led by Scots have been treated by many in comparison with other administrations.
4. Many of these issues are, of course, not confined to Scottish writing. Dickens' use of non-Standard forms of English demonstrates many of the same associations. With a few exceptions, however, the English dialects used by his characters, whether Standard or not, as well as the language use of the narrator, are much closer to each other than is the case between Scots (in its various forms) and Standard English.

5. Cotton cloth was produced in Glasgow; in particular in the East End. This never approached the level of the output of nearby towns, such as Paisley. These specializations mask the fact that every enterprise in the area was founded on essentially the same circumstances of connection to Scotland's mineral wealth while simultaneously being immediately tied to the Atlantic world.
6. The classic study of Scots in the contemporary world is Macafee (1997b).
7. A number of local planning activities have taken place in the regions, most notably in the North-East and South-West. Many mainstream activists have been distrustful of these.
8. A degree of this higher profile can be attributed to the United Kingdom's accession to the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2001. By this accession, the United Kingdom, in the guise of its devolved institutions in Scotland, agreed to protect Scots from denigration and to raise its status (although how this was to be done was left hazy). The application of the Charter (beyond provision for Gaelic) does not appear to have been taken seriously by the Scottish Labour–Scottish Liberal Democrat coalition which formed the Scottish Executive (as it was then called) from 1999 to 2007. The Scottish National Party governments which have been in power since then have generally been more receptive to the needs of the language and its speakers, but have been hampered by economic and political issues, as well as by a global pandemic and general instability in the period after 2019 (for a discussion of the period immediately following ratification, see Millar 2006).
9. This trait continues, with several websites giving examples of 'Glasgow/Glesca slang'. Many local people

would prefer *patter*, although this word implies performative, rather than everyday, usage.

[10.](#) This move away from traditional vocabulary in the city is not complete, however. For urban people, the *stank* is the drain, often at the bottom of a roan pipe, in the pavement. It is proverbial: 'wid ye leuk at that rain? That's the fuitbaw doon the stank.' Its original, rural, meaning is related to the drain in the central courtyard of a farm. The fact that we comment on this type of survival, however, is a further indication that it is the exception which proves the rule.

[11.](#) The theoretical basis for the study of linguistic attrition is Schmid (2011). Scottish discussions of lexical attrition and retention include those already discussed. Agutter and Cowan (1981); Downie (1983); Hendry (1997); McGarrity (1998); Middleton (2001); and Richard (2003); see also Millar (2016b).

[12.](#) For an excellent general description, see Macafee (2001). Corrigan (2010) places the dialect in its Irish context.

Chapter 5

1. Macafee (2002: 3.4) is a brief, but excellent, discussion of the Older Scots vowels in particular: it is a product of the same research which produced the complete version of Aitken (2002).
2. The prestige variety in England, originally an upper-class and upper-middle-class form of London English pronunciation, later spread, through association with hegemonic interests, across that country.
3. In fairness to Wells, there was a time in the history of Scots, as we will see, when the present binary phoneme system did not exist: BITE and TRY were allophones of the same phoneme until the sixteenth century at the earliest.
4. This revision is based primarily upon the wish (on my part) to give the sets and subsets names immediately identifiable as Scots in nature: Johnston's system is intended to describe both (northern) English and Scots varieties. But describing *stane* (or, indeed, *hame*) as being part of the 'home' subset is potentially highly problematical in terms of immediate perception. Moreover, after considerable thought, I have altered the name of one of the sets from that I proposed in earlier work: GOAT is now COAL.
5. There are, in fact, advantages in using this type of 'shorthand'; indeed these are not confined to the work of Aitken, as a reading of, for instance, Dobson's monumental 1968 study of early Modern English pronunciation demonstrates. There is little or no direct evidence which can present an absolutely accurate description of how particular vowels (and vowel sets) were realized in the past. A description which is not fully

phonological may have definite advantages, the words associated with them acting as a mnemonic, in relation to observing the process 'mathematically' rather than in 'real terms'. Aitken on occasion moves away from this ideal, however, apparently equating his idealization with actual pronunciations. Moreover, it could be argued that Johnston's lexical sets perform the same purpose: we concentrate on the sets rather than how they would have been pronounced at a particular point (although there is a fundamental sense of real-world changes within an inherently transparent system).

6. These datings are informed estimates, based on the evidence for southern English. The shifts were likely to have affected Scots at a rather later date, probably through transmission via the northern English dialects. On the other hand, it is quite possible that, like German and Dutch, the Scots Great Vowel Shift was essentially independent of the English equivalent. But the similarities between the two varieties in relation to the development of the <ea> words in most parts of Scotland suggest essentially a common development, albeit with considerable divergence in what happened to the back vowels and in terms of distribution of words into different sets.
7. In most varieties of Scots, *heid* 'head' and *deid* 'dead' are members of BEAT and pronounced /i/, while *daith* is a member of MATE-HAME, with /e/. In some dialects, all three are BEAT, whether pronounced /i/ or /e/.
8. I appreciate that this is a potentially divisive way of describing this variety, but there are dangers in imposing later (socio-)linguistic realities on earlier evidence from the same basic region, just as there are issues with employing *English* in an uncritical way in relation to later stages in the development of Scots.
9. These particular words are chosen to represent major distinctions in some modern dialects in relation to BUIT

found medially or finally in open syllables and following /r/.

10. Because traditional dialects of southern English historically use the voiced sound only in all positions, it is quite possible that in these dialects at least it was the voiceless sounds which were imported. This argument need not concern us here, however. Maguire, Alcorn, Molineaux, Kopaczyk, Karaiskos, and Los (2019) make an intriguing suggestion that the use of in positions—such as word final—where /v/ would be the norm is not evidence for scribal variation, but rather of a phonological change which was eventually reversed.

11. It is even possible that the /l/-less writers of the eighteenth could not fully recognize the earlier system, possibly in the same way that English writers of the generation following Chaucer could not fully understand his scansion system because they no longer pronounce -e systematically and in a functionally meaningful way.

Chapter 6

1. This chapter should be read alongside Macafee's excellent (2002: 7). As will become quickly apparent, lack of research on these matters has meant that the following is particularly reliant on King (1997) and Beal (1997).
2. None of these comments should be taken to mean that native speakers—and grammarians—of these varieties do not—and did not—give greater weight to the differences between their variety and their close relatives more than the similarities, despite the relative linguistic proportions.
3. It should be noted that, as Modern High German demonstrates, this shift in primary marking of case and gender information from noun inflection to the form of determiners and adjectives does not necessarily equate to a breakdown in these categories.
4. King (1997: 166) also records the 'dative plural' identity of adverbs like *quhilom* (< Old English *hwilum* 'for the times/periods'). Such survivals are without doubt 'fossilized', she suggests; they were certainly no more likely to be interpreted as 'dative plural' by thirteenth century Scots as the *t* in *whit* 'what', *that* and *hit* 'it' would be recognized as neuter gender markers by twenty-first century native speakers (or, indeed, their thirteenth century equivalents).
5. An epithet that survived longer than the usage: an acquaintance of my parents, very elderly by the time I met him as a small child, had been known as *seestoo* by his pupils, since, as a Paisley man, he stood out in a Glaswegian school. My parents could not explain the name. The main nickname for Paisley people had, by

the time they grew up in the Inter-War years, become *Buddies* 'human beings, people'.

6. Much to my surprise I have at least once seen the form *caucht* 'caught' in literary Scots (Millar 2018: 171). I have never heard this or potential variants in spoken language. To be fair, however, there is evidence, as we saw, which suggests that a Scotticized pronunciation /də l'ixt/ existed for *delight* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
7. As Moessner (1997: 113) suggests, *gar* (Middle Scots *ger*) 'to make, compel', like the modal verbs proper, takes the bare infinitive, without *tae—til*. This appears to be a Scots innovation, since it is not found in the North Germanic languages from which the verb derives. Compare Scots *he gars me greet* 'he makes me (want to) weep' with Modern Norwegian *han gjør meg å gråte*, where *å* is the infinitive marker.
8. Conversely (and in some senses ironically), as Nurmi (1999) suggests, the triumph of the *do-periphrasis* in London English in the seventeenth century may have been due to overuse of the construction by Scots speakers who had entered London society after the accession of James VI to the English throne in 1603.

Chapter 7

- [1.](#) While English has a greater disposition towards borrowing from certain sources (such as words from Anglo-Norman French, perhaps), you are far more likely to find borrowings from Gaelic in Scots than in the Southern variety, for obvious reasons. Note, however, the comments in [Section 7.2.2.6](#) below. For all of Section 7.2, Macafee (2002: 4) provides an excellent analysis. Macafee (1997a) provides a masterly discussion of borrowing and retention.
- [2.](#) Of course, it is certainly possible that the same word was borrowed independently in each language. In most situations this would be difficult to prove, however.
- [3.](#) This is particularly the case with the employment in this survey of the second edition of the *Concise Scots Dictionary*. In the first edition, for whatever reason, an editorial decision was made to downplay the contribution of Northern Isles dialects to the lexical corpus of Scots as a whole. This decision has, happily, been reversed. We can now see the level of independent borrowing from Norse in those archipelagos, as well as how this proportion differs strikingly from the other varieties.
- [4.](#) For a discussion, see Macafee (1997a:206–9).
- [5.](#) Claims have been made, as discussed in [Chapter 3](#), that the 'Norman' incomers had ceased speaking French as their first language before they entered Scotland. This may well be true, but the language itself remained highly prestigious (as can be seen also in England in the fourteenth century, when Anglo-Norman was essentially moribund).

- [6.](#) See Macafee (1997: 196–8) for further discussion; see also Murison (1971).
- [7.](#) Of course, the level of Latin influence as portrayed in writing may have been exaggerated somewhat by the fact that a large part of those writing at the time would have had at least some familiarity with Latin. This means that it is difficult to be certain about whether the Latin words used in their Scots may not so much have represented borrowing as transfer from the dominant language of writing to the vernacular; the vast majority of Scots speakers who did not have Latin (or, often, significant literacy skills) would not, I imagine, have perceived this type of language use in quite the same way. In fact, it might have seemed like a wall had been constructed, in a fully premeditated manner, to lock them out from elite—‘important’—discourse.
- [8.](#) See Kries (2003) and Macafee (1997a: 200–4) for further analysis.
- [9.](#) See Macafee (1997a:204–6) for further discussion.
- [10.](#) See Ó Baoill (1997) and Macafee (1997a: 199) for discussion and contextualization.
- [11.](#) Interestingly, this word also occurs in Irish English, where it appears to derive from Irish: the South-West has always been a cultural and linguistic crossroads.
- [12.](#) A striking exception to this process involved the survival of local words for ‘porpoise’, in particular *puffy dunter*. It is difficult to say exactly why these words survive, beyond the affection in which these animals are undoubtedly held and the fact that the name cited helps the observer to tell the difference between porpoises and dolphins.

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